

Yuri Yoshida

EVALUATE “PEACE”
Comparative Case Analysis of
Peacebuilding Projects in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

Yuri Yoshida: Evaluate "Peace": Comparative Case Analysis of Peacebuilding Projects in South Sudan
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There are plenty of NGOs and International organizations working on building peace. Most of them have evaluations as a part of their project cycle to make projects impactful, avoid conducting them erroneously, and present their achievement to their donors. On the other hand, an ambiguous concept such as peacebuilding, cannot be countable or measurable. How do those organizations balance the need for accountability and the ambiguity of the concept of "peace", and whose "peace" is it? To address this complexity of evaluation in a conflict-affected setting, this research attempted to analyze this question from three aspects; 1) how the evaluation is implemented, 2) what is considered achievement of peacebuilding activities and projects, and 3) how those criteria for the evaluation reflect the idea of "decolonization". The research applies the Comparative Case Studies as a methodology which selected three project final evaluation reports.

This research discovered that an evaluation report does not necessarily reflect the perception of "peace", but rather a document to indicate how much the intended project goals were achieved. Keys to establishing the decolonized evaluation process are; involving more people from the community to the projects and evaluation process and ensuring the successful use of the Theory of Change. In this research, it is also identified that the representation of the result in each report tends to be influenced by several factors including the involvement of the stakeholders, the purpose of the evaluation, or the evaluators' positionality. Lastly, the lack of awareness of "decolonizing evaluation" was pointed out. Unless the ideas of "peace" are discussed among people influenced by the project, the evaluation process will be just another way to impose "peace" from an outsider's perspective.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Evaluation, Decolonization, South Sudan

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

List of Abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistant Committee
EPI	Everyday Peace Indicator
FFGD	Facilitated Focus Group Discussion
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IKSs	Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs).
KII	Key Informant Interview
OECD	Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development
PaCC	Peace and Community Cohesion
PICA	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
PLUPC	I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan
RfPSS	Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan
Search	Search for Common Ground
ToC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VFG	Verification Focus Group

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	5
1-1. Background and Purpose of the Research.....	5
1-2. Research Question.....	5
1-3. Structure of this research.....	6
Chapter 2: Introduction of Key Concepts and Academic Framework.....	7
2-1. Defining Key Concepts.....	7
<i>Peacebuilding</i>	7
<i>Evaluation</i>	10
<i>Evaluation in conflict-affected settings</i>	12
<i>Theory of change</i>	15
2-2. Introducing Decolonization, Everyday Peace, and Local Turn	16
<i>Decolonization</i>	16
<i>Everyday Peace and Local Turn</i>	19
Chapter 3: Methodology	22
3-1. Process of Comparative Case Study	22
Chapter 4: Comparison of Evaluation Report.....	29
4-1. Analysis of Reports	29
4-1-1. Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC).....	29
4-1-2. The Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS) project.....	38
4-1-3. “I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan”.....	48
4-2. Comparison and Analysis of Three Cases	56
4-2-1. How evaluation processes were different?	57
4-2-2. What is considered an achievement?.....	59
4-2-3. What indicates their consideration of the “decolonization”?	60
4-2-4. 2Explanatory variables	62
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	65
Appendix.....	67
Bibliography.....	69

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1-1. Background and Purpose of the Research

What does “success” mean in peacebuilding-related projects, and how can we measure the achievements of those projects? In the field of peace and conflict study, there is abundant discussion of “what is peace?”, yet there is no absolute answer to this question since everyone has a different definition of their peace. However, when it comes to “peace” pursued by international development projects, peace has to be measured, visualized and reported. That is because, those projects are funded by donors, and proper explanation is required for accountability and the improvement of the projects (Buchanan-Smith et al., 2016; INTRAC, 2017c; OECD, 2012).

There are thousands of NGOs and International organizations working on building peace and most of them have evaluations as a part of their project cycle in order to make projects impactful and avoid conducting them erroneously, as well as to present their achievement to their donors. On the other hand, an ambiguous concept such as peacebuilding, cannot be countable or measurable. How do those organizations balance the need for accountability and the ambiguity of the concept of “peace”? To address this complexity of evaluation in a conflict-affected setting, this research attempts to analyze what is considered a success of peacebuilding projects, how it is measured, and whose peace it is.

I believe there is a benefit of scrutinizing the linkage between evaluation and peace, for practitioners in the fields, academic sphere, and most importantly, those who live in conflict-affected areas. It could share awareness of the potential harmfulness that evaluation with the standards of “outsiders” could cause. To conduct evaluation means setting a certain standard for good or bad and examining events accordingly. If the sets of standards created by external entities (such as international organizations or international experts) do not match with standards of people in the conflict-affected area, those evaluations could judge projects only from one side. Therefore, researching what is set as a standard in various organizations, can shed light on the potential harmfulness of evaluation.

1-2. Research Question

Following the background and purpose of the research, I have analyzed the evaluation of the peacebuilding projects implemented by different types of international organizations. With this topic, the research question is;

“In peacebuilding projects implemented by international organizations, how do they recognize their “success” through evaluation, and how are they different?” To answer this research question,

there are three aspects to be considered; 1) how the evaluation is implemented, 2) what is considered achievement of peacebuilding activities and projects, and 3) how those criteria for the evaluation reflect the idea of “decolonization”. In this research, the hypothesis for this question is “The measurement and representation of peace differ depending on the involved actors, donors, and evaluators”. To confirm this hypothesis, it would be essential to identify the attributes of each project and organization. Therefore, this research compares different projects based on those who are involved in the projects, practitioners who implemented a project, and donors. To execute the comparison, cases have been selected based on certain criteria. Further explanations are provided in the Methodology chapter. Conducting a comparison of case studies and analysis of the evaluation process could be useful for further development of the projects in the field of peace and conflict to create a better evaluation process and reporting to access more funding from donors.

1-3. Structure of this research

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, explains the academic frameworks for this research and those were underlaid as a foundation to conduct this research. In addition to it, some terms, “peacebuilding”, “theory of change”, “evaluation”, and “evaluation in conflict-affected settings”, are discussed in this chapter as well. Then, Chapter 3, introduces the methodology applied to this research, a Comparative Case Study. In Chapter 4, there are comparisons of different cases by referring to project evaluation reports from various organizations. After highlighting the differences, they are analyzed how and why they are different. Lastly, the next chapter, Conclusion revisits the research question and sums up findings by referring to Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I am going to introduce some theories underlying my research as well as the explanation of key concepts based on the literature review.

2-1. Defining Key concepts

Peacebuilding

In this research, the focus is on analyzing the evaluation of peacebuilding projects. To specify what it means, this section first describes what is included in my research scope. Nevertheless, the detailed reasoning of the case selection takes place in the methodology section, therefore, it only mentions the definition of peacebuilding referring to the literature.

The term, “peacebuilding” was started to be discussed in the academic sphere in 1975 by Johan Galtung. He did not explicitly mention the definition of “peacebuilding”, however, he suggested the associative approach as a potential “self-supporting conflict resolution” which is what he referred to as peacebuilding (Galtung Johan, 1976). He argued the structure of peace – that could decrease the likelihood of not only direct but also structural violence – is something more than superstructure but it is an infrastructure and multilevel structure with interdependency at all levels of society (Ibid). After this discussion around “peacebuilding” has started, one of the most well-known definitions is probably the one established by Boutros Ghali in “An Agenda for Peace”. Here, peacebuilding was defined as an “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict” as well as three other terms which are; conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacemaking (Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Following this publication, the “2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations” (also known as the Brahimi report) also defined peacebuilding as

“activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something more than just the absence of war. Thus, peace-building includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education, and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance for democratic development (including electoral

assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques.” (UN General Assembly and Security Council, 2000, p.3)

Based on those definitions of peacebuilding, it is possible to interpret that peacebuilding-related projects aim at establishing infrastructure for something more than the absence of violence.

As it was concluded in “Peacebuilding; What is in a name?”, there are no common definitions of peacebuilding, although various organizations are implementing “peacebuilding projects”. It is because each organization interprets the meaning of peacebuilding differently depending on each organization’s sets of values, strengths, or even interests (Barnett Michael et al., 2007). In their analysis, Barnett et.al (2007) compared the definitions of “peacebuilding” by several types of organizations, from multilateral aid organizations such as UN organizations to bilateral aid institutions. This analysis also revealed that major concepts associated with peacebuilding activities differ, such as “conflict prevention”, “crisis management”, or “peacekeeping” etc. Moreover, some of them focus on the period immediately after the conflict, meanwhile, others stated peacebuilding could include conflict prevention (Ibid). Furthermore, whereas the definitions by the UN are rather putting importance on building up the structure of the society, other organizations might have different aspects to look this through, such as development (as in the context of reduction of poverty), military activities, or prevention of recurring conflicts (Barnett Michael et al., 2007; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1992; UN General Assembly and Security Council, 2000). In addition to this analysis mentioned above, there are two meanings the term “peacebuilding” can contain, based on Lisa Schirch’s categorization. One is a “direct process” that intentionally focuses on the direct root cause of conflict and attempts to mitigate it, whereas the other is “an indirect process” such as supports setting up an environment for the communication to develop comprehensive strategies which include economic development, humanitarian assistance, or other sectors (Alliance for Peacebuilding, n.d.; Schirch, 2013).

As well as we can see peacebuilding is diverse in nature, and there are several attempts to categorize the different types of peacebuilding activities. For instance, Barnett Michael et al referred above sorted peacebuilding activities into the following four sectorial categories based on their analysis of 24 multilateral organizations, and bilateral organizations: “Security and Military”, “Social, Economic, Developmental, and Humanitarian”, “Political and diplomatic”, “Justice and reconciliation” (2007). Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies suggested the concept of “Strategic Peacebuilding” which consists of three main categories: Structural and Institutional Change and Development, Justice and Healing, and Violence Prevention, Conflict Response and Transformation. Those main categories are relevant to the eleven subcategories but some of the sub-

categories belong to two main categories (University of Notre Dame, n.d.). (Figure 1: Cited from

John Paul Lederach and Katie Mansfield, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies).

Schirch (2013) suggested that there are five

categories of peace and human security activities:

“Politically Stable Democracy”, “Sustainable Economy”, “Safe and Secure Environment”, “Justice and Rule of Law”, and “Social and Cultural Well-Being”.

Bush (1998) also had a similar categorization.

However, as he perceives peacebuilding as impacts, not activities, they are not categorizations of the peacebuilding activities but about the area where the impact could emerge through those activities. He called these “areas of potential

impact”. They are; Institutional Capacity, Military and Human security, Political Structures and Processes, Economic Structures and Processes, and Social Reconstruction and Empowerment (Bush, 1998).

Although there is no common definition of those categorizations, it seems that most of them share similar ideas such as; Security, Governance, Development, and Reconciliation. However, the border of categorization is blurred, for example, some of them include a judicial system as a part of reconciliation while some might consider it as a part of governance. Moreover, there are wide range of activities called peacebuilding, including some which might not be “direct process”, directly connected to mitigate tension between people or prevent violence from escalation.

To specify the scope of this research, I decided to focus on a narrow definition of peacebuilding, that excludes activities such as economic development, humanitarian aid, or support for the judicial system. Indeed, there is no room for discussion regarding the significance of multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches (International Peace Institute, 2017; The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), n.d.), and this research does not or cannot completely set direct peacebuilding approach from other indirect activities. However, the scope of this research has been determined narrow since the main goal for it is to focus on efforts that attempt to visualize the achievement of “peace”. The types of activities are especially “peace” through reconciliation, dialogue, and cohesion since those topics are highly relevant to people’s emotions and they are harder to visualize than other factors. Further explanation is provided in the following chapter which elaborates on methodology.

Strategic Peacebuilding Paths



<Figure 1>

Evaluation

This section briefly introduces different types of evaluation oftentimes used in development projects. It aims to help us familiarize ourselves with various types of evaluations, criteria, and data collections, and comprehend the intention of organizations to select certain evaluation methodologies. In various international development projects, the evaluation process is categorized into the areas of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL). The purpose of MEAL is to provide adequate explanations of projects' outcomes to the stakeholders including donors (accountability), get useful insights for the betterment of project implementations in the future (learning), and contribute to evidence-based political decision-making (EvalCommunity, n.d.; WFP, n.d.). As one of the most dominant definitions of evaluation, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines "evaluation" as follows;

"The systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. The evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy, or program. An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, on-going, or completed development intervention." (OECD/ DAC, 2002, pp.21-22)

In addition to this definition, they specified the evaluation criteria too. In 1991, they formed five criteria; **Relevance**, **Effectiveness**, **Efficiency**, **Impact**, and **Sustainability**, and they are one of the major tools for the evaluation process of development and humanitarian projects, programs, and policies (DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019). In 2018-2019, however, they decided to revisit and create the sixth criterion, **Coherence**, due to many inquiries asking for clarification for certain criteria (Ibid). Moreover, the OECD determined two principles for applying those six criteria. The first one is to analyze the context deeply to accomplish a high-quality evaluation that accommodates the circumstances well enough (Ibid). Secondly, we have to use the criteria according to the purpose of evaluation and avoid applying all criteria mechanically (Ibid). According to the OECD website, each criterion was explained as follows (OECD, n.d.);

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

- **Sustainability:** The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.
- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.
- **Efficiency:** The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.
- **Impact:** The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.
- **Coherence:** The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.

Those criteria have become much more common than what was initially expected, and DAC norms and standards play a central role (Lundgren, 2017) on various occasions in regard to development projects. There are various types of evaluation in the context of international evaluation, however, as mentioned, this research focuses on the final evaluation report. In addition to the different types of evaluation, there are several methodologies for collecting data as well. Some ways for the data collection sound familiar, such as interviews, surveys and questionnaires, observation, focus group discussion, or randomized control trials (RCTs) while others may sound unique such as Quasi-experimental approach, Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), Photography and video, Case studies and stories of change (INTRAC, 2017a). Interviews are common to collect data and Key Informant Interview (KII) is often used in the evaluation process. The KII is an approach that involves interviewing people who have particularly informed perspectives on the target program (BetterEvaluation, n.d.-b). It is an in-depth interview of 15-35 people with expertise or first-hand experience of topics of interest in the research (USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation, 1996). This methodology is particularly appropriate in some situations when descriptive information would be enough to make decisions, we need to understand the motivations, perspectives, and behaviors of stakeholders, the main goal is to generate recommendations with some help from key informants, and the quantitative data needs some assistance to interpret (Ibid). To introduce another methodology, Focus Group Discussion (FDG) is also common in the evaluation and research process. The discussion is normally conducted with 6-12 people from the groups who share their backgrounds in order to generate qualitative insights from certain populations so that their ideas, thoughts, and feelings will be represented (INTRAC, 2017b). This methodology is beneficial when implementing an organization needs to know the stakeholders' preferences and attitudes, concerns need to be taken into account,

and suggestions from participants of the discussions (USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation, 2011). It might not be as familiar as other methodologies such as interviews, the Observation is also a way to collect data based on the monitoring or assessment processes or circumstances and write them down which helps the evaluator to witness people's behaviors in a natural context (Government of New South Wales (NSW), 2021). The advantage of using this methodology is its little impact on the people, the possibility to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, and flexibility, while the disadvantage is its need for careful preparation with a clear purpose of what you will observe (Ibid). Moreover, the source of data also differs, and some data could be measured directly whereas others could be gathered from secondary data, or even collected through informal monitoring during the process of evaluation (Ibid).

Evaluation in conflict-affected settings

The significance of evaluation in peacebuilding-related activities has been discussed among international institutions as well as scholars, even though it was not a dominant topic in the field of peace and conflict study. OECD, for example, described the need for the evaluation in a conflict setting by mentioning how enormously resources have been invested in the peacebuilding projects, yet “The logic and assumptions underlying many activities in these fields are untested and objectives are unclear. Sketchy understanding of a conflict and unchecked assumptions can produce interventions that worsen tensions and fuel the conflicts they seek to mitigate” (OECD, 2012, p.7). And also, “little to no evaluation activity in settings of violent conflict, has meant that there is often very little credible information about the effectiveness and results of such endeavors” (Ibid).

In the following year OECD published this report, World Bank also issued a policy research working paper focusing on “Impact Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Interventions” which also describes the needs of evaluation as follows; “To deliver better results on the ground, it is necessary to improve the understanding of the impacts and effectiveness of development interventions operating in contexts of conflict and fragility” (Gaarder & Annan, 2013, p.3). In those papers, they suggest how hard it is to set standardized evaluation processes and criteria for peacebuilding activities.

As another attempt to measure the impact of peace and conflict-related projects, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) should be included here as well. According to Bush (1998), PCIA differs from other “evaluations” in development projects because this method aims to discover the effects of projects, not outputs, outcomes, or impacts, but changes in the area which was not intended to or designed to happen. Moreover, their assessment has two functions;

evaluation after the implementation of projects, and anticipation of impacts potentially caused by proposed projects.

When we cast an eye on the academic sphere, there are several discussions related to the topic of this research. For example, “Envisioning Success: Building Blocks for Strategic and Comprehensive Peacebuilding Impact Evaluation”, attempted to suggest two processes of evaluation by applying a participatory approach and to address the missing macro-micro linkage in peacebuilding evaluation (Fast & Neufeldt, 2005). The authors discussed that the methodologies, the categories of impacts, and the process of changes are the focus of the impact evaluation in peacebuilding projects, which helped them to lead two suggestions for the new methodologies for the peacebuilding evaluation: Strategic analysis, and Comprehensive visioning (Ibid). Comprehensive visioning is an approach to envision the projects’ goals to achieve and revise them throughout the life of projects, whereas Strategic analysis is a frame to analyze in/external actors and their positions in the projects (Ibid). Importantly, those approaches are suggestions for better project programming with a strong emphasis on participatory processes. Participatory processes were the center of this article, because “participation brings empowerment, sustainability, ownership, accountability, and group cohesion, and ensures contextual relevance to peacebuilding assessment, monitoring and evaluation” according to Fast and Neufeldt (2005, p.29).

To discover the way to implement the participatory approach in evaluation regarding the peace-building process, the “everyday peace indicator” (hereafter EPI) should be the very concept mentioned here. This is an index thoroughly demonstrated in their book, “Reclaiming Everyday Peace” (Firchow, 2018). Unlike the other evaluation indicators developed by international entities, the utmost feature of EPI is that evaluation criteria are established by the communities affected by conflicts.

In this book, Firchow firstly pointed out the problems of the current evaluation such as the lost nuances and context in the quantitative approaches, the tendency of evaluation which attempts to hide their failure, and most importantly, the exclusion of people in the community (2018). Following that chapter, the process for creating EPI was introduced and its participatory approach was highly emphasized in order to measure peace for the beneficiaries (of the projects) with their perceptions of peace, not the external actors’. The process for creating EPI consists of the phase of forming a list of potential indicators with focus groups, the phase of polishing the list with Verification Focus Groups (hereafter VFGs), and the phase of gathering the responses to the questionnaires created based on the lists as well as to conduct the face-to-face interview (Ibid). The process of creating indicators is introduced here, by referring to Firchow’s book. In the first step, a few focus groups with different members are made (for example, youth, male, and female) and

those groups are intended to include people with various backgrounds such as employed/unemployed, minorities, residing geographically far from others, and so on. They are encouraged to discuss a list of indicators of everyday peace through questions like “What factors do you use in your daily life to determine whether you are more or less at peace?”. Following this process, VFGs and additional community members will finalize the lists of indicators for the survey on a larger scale. Lastly, the face-to-face interview and the survey with those lists of indicators will be conducted by using a mobile phone to collect more data. In this book, the final indicators in Uganda and Colombia were introduced and categorized which were unique and reflected the situation of everyday life well, such as “presence of NGO”, “Internet is available”, “people are not superstitious” or “Traditional Festivals are routinely celebrated” and so on (Ibid, pp.112-114).

Here, I have shared standardized indicators suggested by international entities to see how the EPI differs from standardized indicators. In European Commission, created different levels of indicators for impact, outcome, and outputs for each segment of peace-related activities for Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) programs (European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, 2022). Those are the indicators to monitor the result achieved through the intervention, yet not fixed and are continuously updated. Aside from four obligatory core indicators (New and/or emerging crisis, Multilateralism, Conflict-sensitivity, and Number of persons directly benefiting from the intervention), several more indicators depend on the area of peacebuilding activities. When we focus on the indicators for Mediation, Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and Reconciliation, “the number of peace committees/structures established”, “the number of leaders promoting tolerance in committees”, or “Number of reconciliation initiatives/dialogues set up” are listed as the output-level indicators. On the other hand, “The number of violent conflicts in the targeted area of the Action”, “Global Peace Index annual score” or “Public perception of the effectiveness of the peace process”, for impact-level which supposed to be the indicators for wider and more systematic level of change than output-level. SDGs are also indicators for measuring results achieved by diverse efforts to tackle global issues. In terms of peacebuilding, Goal 16 of SDGs has indicators, and its measurement is also focused on the number of people, events, or amount of expenditure which rely on numbers and data similar to EU indicators (United Nations, n.d.). Firchow also mentioned indicators for SDG Goal 16 do not necessarily have data sources accordingly for measuring its result and thus “Although SDG 16 represents significant advances in prioritizing peacebuilding efforts by the UN community, Goal 16 does not ultimately intend to measure peace comprehensively.” (Firchow, 2018e, p.47).

The comparison between EPI and other standardized was intended to highlight the uniqueness of EP here, nevertheless, using the indicators based on the datasets and quantitative research should not be discouraged but rather it is important to ponder how those different indicators could complement each other's for the better evaluation. As Ginty and Firchow discussed in their analytical essay, bottom-up indicators like EPI have advantages when it comes to capturing details in the communities and conveying narratives by the local community whereas top-down indicators or data sets enable us to understand the national/regional level of the situation of conflict and to compare various event in distant (Firchow & Ginty, 2017). Moreover, EPI can be very context-dependent and hard to adapt to the other cases as well as the discussion held for the concept of everyday peace. On the other hand, top-down indicators tend to be influenced by the methodology of data collection and the scope of data collection. For example, one of the most used databases for conflict-related events, ACLED, collects events related to political instability but not crime-related events (Ibid). Even though those organizations put efforts into hiring researchers who know the context of the countries of the subject, those people are not necessarily from the very community affected by conflicts nor able to share their perspectives on those conflict indicators. All those features and differences are very understandable and that is why the combination of multiple indicators which have distinct advantages from each other.

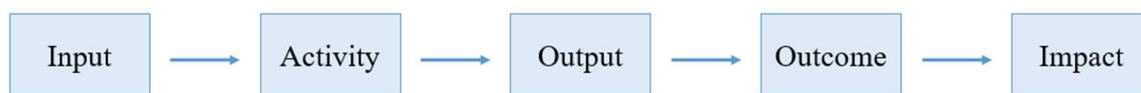
Theory of change

Project management processes in the social development context utilize a wide range of tools, and recently, the theory of change (ToC) is one tool gaining more attention. Though it is not an academic theory, it is inevitable for this research to introduce this concept. This research investigates evaluation processes of peacebuilding projects by international actors who set the concept of ToC at the center of evaluation frameworks. Theory of change is a comprehensive explanation of how and why activities implemented by an intervention (e.g., a project, program, or policy) could lead to a desired change and intended impact (Better Evaluation, n.d.; Center for Theory of Change, n.d.; Rogers, 2014). Even though there are several tools for project evaluation and programming, ToC has become more common to use than before. United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) specified four purposes for employing this concept (UNSDG, 2017). First of all, they mentioned that a ToC is helpful to think through the intervention systematically in a very complex circumstance. Secondly, it is useful to track the logic of how the project is expected to make an impact and to correct the approaches if they seem not helpful based on previous experiences. Thirdly, ToC could support expanding and deepening partnerships with

other stakeholders through the process of forming the ToC, collaboratively. Lastly, sharing the ToC among stakeholders makes their communication easier.

In terms of the representation of a theory of change, it could differ a lot depending on organizations that use this concept. When a theory of change is used in documents from development-related project reports, it is often displayed with several boxes like a flowchart (Figure 2). Essentially, that flowchart consists of boxes of “inputs”, “outputs”, “outcomes”, and “impacts”, and those boxes are connected as a result chain which is usually a linear chain. Yet, as mentioned before, representation of the theory of change varies to a great extent and sometimes they are a lot more complicated (BetterEvaluation, n.d.-a; Rogers, 2014), for instance, there could be “assumption” or “external factor” in some theories of change whereas others may describe it only with a few sentences. Below, definitions for each word in the flowchart are introduced (OECD/DAC, 2002; Rogers, 2014).

<Figure 2: The example of the representation of ToC>



Input: Various kinds of resources for implementing certain interventions. (e.g., funds, human resources, material)

Activities: Actions taken, or work performed to produce expected output. They will take place by utilizing inputs. (e.g., workshops, meetings)

Outputs: The immediate effects or the direct products or deliverables of intervention. (e.g., number of people who participated in the workshops)

Outcome: The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs. (e.g., changes in participants' daily interaction with people from other communities)

Impact: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. (e.g., people will have good relationships with each other regardless of the community they belong to)

2-2. Introducing Decolonization, and Everyday Peace, and Local Turn

Decolonization

As for the first academic framework for my thesis, I will introduce the concept of Decolonization. The word, decolonization could be interpreted as “identifying colonial systems, structures, and relationships, and working to challenge those systems” (University of Essex, 2022).

In “Decolonization A Brief History of the World”, Betts (2012) stated the concept of decolonization has been developed in the political context from around the end of the 20th. In this article, he also introduced the transition of discussion regarding decolonization by pointing out multiple aspects, such as political, economic, or cultural perspectives (Raymond F. Betts, 2012). Moreover, the idea of decolonization has been explored by not only academia but also by practitioners in the field and by social movements as well (Mallard et al., 2021). As the concept influenced and has been developed by a wide range of groups and circumstances, decolonization is often applied in various fields. The field of international development/aid/peacebuilding is no exception. Decolonization is gaining more attention than before due to the nature of those activities which are often conducted by Global North countries. Peace Direct in collaboration with international organizations: Adeso, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security, conducted research from the perspectives of decolonization in aid. In their report “Time to decolonize aid”, they mentioned the importance of looking at their field through the lenses of decolonization in the following sentences.

“Decolonising development, humanitarian aid, and peacebuilding – the movement to address and dismantle racist and discriminatory structures and norms that are hidden in plain sight in the aid system – is emerging as an urgent, vital, and long overdue discussion which adds greater weight to the existing calls to transform the system. If policymakers, donors, practitioners, academics, and activists do not begin to address structural racism and what it means to decolonize aid, the system may never be able to transform itself in ways that truly shift power and resources to local actors.” (Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security et al., 2021, p.2)

The main message here is that peacebuilding projects always have the risk of reinforcing the unfair power balance through this existing system, and thus, everyone in this field needs to attempt to reconstruct it. The article issued by the Berghof Foundation analyzed the decolonization of peacebuilding by categorizing them into “Social justice peacebuilding” and “Stability peacebuilding” as two poles of the spectrum which means that both concepts can contribute to each other and does not mean they are against each other (Schirch, 2022). By introducing those two perspectives, Schirch analyzed decolonization and led to a conclusion that decolonizing peacebuilding with ten core elements, might cause contradictions between social justice peacebuilding and Stability peacebuilding (2022). Those ten elements help us realize what aspects should be taken into consideration to deconstruct the current system of peacebuilding and how complicated it is. Those elements vary from basic, but important aspects such as an expansion of local ownership to further implications of the other aspects related to climate, the military-industrial complex, and digitalization (Schirch, 2022). What should be highlighted here is an innovative

approach is required for decolonization as the situation surrounding us has changed drastically and it's now still changing.

However, despite the importance of the efforts to know systematic change in international aid projects, it is also essential to understand what decolonization really means to some people. In “Decolonization is not a metaphor”, the authors insisted that the term, decolonization should not be used as a metaphor in a situation that does not in land involved repatriation, since it could cause the risk of trivializing the harm of actual colonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012). There is this term they called “settlers move to innocence” that refers to “those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all.” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.10).

Having mentioned all those discussions, I still plan to investigate how the evaluation process could get away from the current structure of international development or humanitarian aid industries by applying this concept of decolonization in my research. Corsetti (Lea Corsetti, 2022), pointed out that there is a secondary meaning of decolonization that is a process of deconstructing colonial ideologies, “respect to the superiority and privilege of western thoughts and approaches”. Although I take the criticism by Tuck and Yang into consideration, I believe colonialism and how those industries can be seen have similarities as discussed above. Therefore, I will use decolonization in this research, yet, those are used in a secondary meaning that Corsetti mentioned.

In fact, in the context of evaluation, decolonizing evaluation is not a dominant topic, yet, started to be discussed. Decolonizing monitoring and evaluation remain Western-dominated ideas without reflecting local values and the idea of universality and a non-political approach to evaluation should be reconsidered. Some donors are aware of putting efforts in this decolonizing perspective in the evaluation, and they pointed out how they attempt to decolonize the evaluation process: move beyond tokenism, evaluate for all stakeholders’ learning, do not impose evaluation methods or approaches, and unburden local partners (Ben Bestor, 2022). By saying “tokenism”, they argued that it is essential to involve local partners and community in the design of the projects, not just as participants in interviews or hiring local staff as enumerators, etc. The donors also mentioned that the ultimate goal for evaluation is for useful knowledge and learning, but the usefulness for donors should not be prioritized. In their opinion, not only the purpose of evaluation but also the approach for the evaluation should be reconsidered and co-created by all stakeholders. Similarly, they have spotted there should be less burden for local partners in the process of evaluation, especially with technical matters, such as requirements or translation of languages, etc. Having mentioned the discussion among donors, “Made in Africa Evaluation: Decolonizing Evaluation in Africa” by Frehiwot (2019) should be included in this discussion as well. In this

article, she pointed out the very nature of evaluation in Africa, “What is the role of M&E institutions that have the power to fund or de-fund local and national initiatives?” “How do these organizations decolonize their analyses, views, strategies, and ideologies while still meeting their core mandate?” (2019, p.26) She argued how much evaluation maintains the power relationship and how evaluation should be reconstructed based on “African voices, literature, and experiences” with integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) (Frehiwot, 2019).

As it has been shown, evaluation tends to give more power to the evaluators or donors than other stakeholders. To truly reflect the impacts of the projects on the community, those ideas and arguments of “decolonizing evaluation” are crucial to explore more.

Everyday Peace and local turn

The second concept to be shared is Everyday Peace. According to Roger Mac Ginty,

“Everyday peace refers to the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence.” (2014, p.549)

This concept has been discussed among researchers in the field of Peace study and applied to various case studies. As was cited above, everyday peace is a practice used among people and generated organically for navigating their lives to avoid recurring violence in their communities (Mac Ginty, 2014). Some people may wonder what the act of everyday peace can be. Mac Ginty introduced different types of social practices that compose Everyday Peace in his article such as; Avoidance, Ambiguity, Ritualized politeness, Telling, and Blame deferring (Mac Ginty, 2014). This may sound like this is a beautiful way to coexist with one another in the same community however, Ginty also mentioned its shortcomings. He explained that everyday peace is a very limited form of peace, and it is conflict management by tolerating and coexisting rather than conflict transformation (Ibid). It is, therefore, a certain form of coping mechanism in conflict-affected areas. It was also phrased differently; “the likelihood of everyday practices leading to the construction of bottom-up peace must take into account the way the everyday is navigated in societies that appear to be stuck in their war-to-peace transitions.” (Marijan, 2017, p.69). In relation to this, one of the questions Mac Ginty casts at the end of his book, is “Is the everyday peace described in the book really peace? Or is it merely tolerance or a grudging agreement to inhabit the same space?” (Mac Ginty, 2021, p.214). However, following this question, he also reminded us where can be the location of everyday peace likely to take place. In “deeply divided societies marked by chronic conflict and

dysfunction, civil wars, and mass-scale international warfare”, it would be too idealistic to expect perfect peace (Ibid).

Moreover, when it comes to the critics of everyday peace, it is worth mentioning the paradox of the term, “everyday” or “local turn” based on the argument raised by Elisa Randazzo. In her article, she pointed out two paradoxes of “everyday” in the field of peacebuilding; the first point is the arbitrariness of everyday can contain the risk of marginalization and selection among people in the process of everyday peacebuilding. The second one is that this everyday peace might create one linear approach which is what everyday peace is supposed to oppose (Randazzo, 2016). As for the first argument, this concept might select a certain approach as the preferable way of everyday peace whereas others might not be, as some questions suggest; what if some people want a so-called liberal approach, or, why resilience is the dominant way to be recognized as the action to show people’s agency (Ibid). Regarding the second point, Randazzo mentioned that the hybridity of everyday peace and liberal peace may require have clear division between everydayness and liberal approach, despite the original aim of everyday peace is to criticize liberal peacebuilding by suggesting a non-linear approach and interconnectedness in everyday peace (Ibid). Although this counterargument against the everyday peace concept is valuable, I have to remind us of how everyday peace is a context-dependent concept, first of all. Furthermore, everyday peace does not mean reinforcing or legitimizing resilience nor keeping the conflict “cold” which attempts not to trigger recurring conflicts but does not aim for the peace to develop either (Mac Ginty, 2014). As for the second point, although this concept of “hybridity” needs to avoid forming binary aspects of local and international in order to establish peacebuilding without limitation for local (since they are supposed to be subject to be emancipated) (Marijan, 2017), those concepts can be the first step to introduce perspectives from local and diverse the process of peacebuilding. Therefore, I believe this argument does not undermine the concept of everyday peace but warns how those concepts (local turn, everyday, hybridity, etc.) should be treated in the academic field.

As mentioned above, the idea of everyday peace can be a powerful tool to give voice to people and community which I believe something should be the center of peacebuilding, not international/elitist institutions, or organizations. There are plenty of case studies conducted around this topic, everyday peace, with different regions or themes. In her article on everyday peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Northern Ireland, Marijan analyzed those two cases which are highly influenced by liberal peacebuilding to explore how bottom-up approaches supported by individuals could contribute to durable peace (Marijan, 2017). She demonstrated three ways individuals attempt to show their agency: place-making, symbolic practices, and competing narratives and performances (Ibid). By using those actions taken by people, the important message in her article is

that what people in post-conflict areas do as everyday practice, such as their ways to interact with each other, is political and those activities should not be overlooked (Ibid).

In the research on Kirkik, Iraq, everyday peace and everyday conflict in deeply divided areas were conducted with special emphasis on the “privileges” of certain groups (O’Driscoll, 2021). This discussion throws light on the politics and power dynamics in conflict-affected areas which is tightly connected with one of the critics Mac Ginty raised in his article. It was about the potential unbalance of power in the deeply divided community and how everyday peace can be applied in this situation (Mac Ginty, 2014). Kirkik is a multi-ethnic city that historically experienced conflicts over its political control, and this case study focused on people’s behavior in the bazaar based on the survey carried out to over 500 people for the analysis of the role of privilege and spaces in the deeply divided area (O’Driscoll, 2021). This analysis found that “privilege” at an everyday level, particularly where conflict avoidance dominates, plays a significant role in the emergence of conflicts because privileged groups tend to have acts of “everyday conflict”, which is, in her article, the act of separation in people’s daily life (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Randazzo, 2016). Moreover, this research revealed that the privilege can be connected to the history that resulted in different power dynamics at the local level compared to current institutional power divisions. This indicates that analysis through the everyday of people in the community could help international intervention with grasping the reality on the ground and betterment of projects they implement (O’Driscoll, 2021).

In my research, I do not mean to romanticize the idea of “everyday”, rather, intend to employ this concept in the evaluation which oftentimes tends to give power to evaluators belong to international organizations or elitist institutions in the process of peacebuilding projects. Especially, when the projects are funded by international actors, I expect this concept to underpin people’s voices as foundations of peacebuilding projects and enable this research to constructively criticize the current power balance in international intervention.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To identify the differences in the evaluation processes and their uniqueness depending on the organizations' attributes, this research applies a methodology of Comparative Case Study. I have selected three cases which are the final evaluation reports issued by three organizations that implemented projects in South Sudan. The purpose of this case study is to spot the differences in the process of evaluation, discuss the reasons for differences, and suggest potential improvements in the evaluation processes.

3-1. Process of Comparative Case Study

The Comparative Study is often used in the academic field of Education, Political sciences, or Psychology, however, the definition of Case Study, and Comparative Case Study could differ depending on the situation (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1999). According to Kaarbo and Beasley (1999), there are various types of case studies, for instance, case studies could be used for establishing a new theory, confirming pre-existing theories, or elaborating on the pre-existing theories as well as assessing cases closely throughout the process. In this research, the limited number of cases allows me to have a close look at each case, on the other hand, three cases would not be enough to establish a new theory. Therefore, I have applied this methodology for a thorough examination of each case by comparing them from several aspects. Thus, this study aims to find an implication for how and why their approaches are different, rather than establishing a new theory. Kaarbo and Beasley also explained the necessary six steps to take for a successful Comparative Case Study and suggested a practical guidebook (1999). Although there were several articles written on a similar topic (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Goodrick, 2014), this guidebook demonstrated particularly comprehensive and practical steps for applying the Comparative Case Study as methodology. For this reason, Chapter 3 follows steps in their guideline with further explanations.

Identify Specific Research Questions for Focused Comparison

As explained in Chapter 1, the research question is “In peacebuilding projects implemented by international organizations, how do they recognize their “success”, and how are they represented?” The main point of this discussion is how is “peace” measured and represented in those project evaluation processes. To investigate it further, there are three key questions to be considered; 1) how the evaluation is implemented, 2) what is considered as an achievement of peacebuilding activities and projects, and 3) how those criteria for the evaluation reflect the idea of

“decolonization”. In the following chapter, three cases have been compared, and they were assessed with those three aspects.

Identify Variables

In this step, the relevant variables are specified based on the hypothesis. In scientific research, “variables” are used as a logical set of “attributes” meaning characters of a person or a thing (Babbie, 2014). Moreover, there are some attributes called variables which are categorized into dependent and independent variables. A “dependent variable” is assumed to depend on or be caused by another variable whereas an “independent variable” is assumed to be a cause of or to determine a dependent variable (ibid). In addition to it, there is another term for variables called “explanatory variable”. The explanatory variable is another form of calling an independent variable, however, they are slightly different. Independent variables should be used only when they are utterly independent of any other variables and only dependent on each other (The Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), n.d.). If it is not certain, the term “explanatory variable” is preferable to be used in the research. Therefore, this research uses explanatory variables which are suggested below.

There are four identified variables; Involved Actors, Donors, Evaluators, and the Duration of the evaluation. Three of them are based on the hypothesis that “The measurement and representation of peace differ depending on the Involved Actors, Donors, and Evaluators”. On the contrary, the duration of the evaluation is alternatively added to the explanation variables to test another hypothesis; “The measurement and representation of peace differ depending on the duration of the evaluation” in case the first hypothesis did not seem to be relevant.

a. Involved Actors (Who are involved in the projects?)

The “Actors” does not only mean the organizations who conducted the projects but also who were the target beneficiaries and the partners of the project. In this research, Implementors, Beneficiaries, donors, and Partners are considered explanatory variables because each actor has their purpose, approach, and benefits for engaging in the projects. It is easy to imagine project implementors may influence a lot to the evaluation processes since evaluation tends to be a part of the project and it is embedded when the projects are programmed by organizations who conduct them.

In addition, the participants of the evaluation, which could be beneficiaries or partner organizations, are considered as well. Since participatory approaches are very different from traditional approaches, considering people involved in the evaluation process would be essential for comparison. For instance, in EPI, people living in the project sites were heavily involved

throughout the process of evaluation. On the other hand, there are countless projects that do not involve people affected by projects in their evaluation process.

b. Donor (Who funded?)

The donor and implementer of the projects tend to be different but working closely. Since donors financially support the projects, generally have significant influence over projects. Thus, it is substantial to consider this factor as something that could affect the process of evaluation.

c. Evaluator (Who evaluated?)

If the evaluation is undertaken by a member of the organization, that is the internal evaluation whereas it is an external evaluation if it is undertaken by a person, not a member of the organization (Melissa Conley-Tyler, 2005). There are multiple differences between internal and external evaluation, and both have their advantages and disadvantages. When external evaluation should be taken, two factors are strongly relevant: “Perceived objectivity” and “Accountability for use of government funds” (Ibid). This means external evaluation is preferable if the organization wants to be perceived that they chose the objective option, and if they want to be certain about the legitimacy of evaluation transparency (Ibid). In this study, those differences can be a critical factor to be considered because most of the organizations utilize funds from governmental organizations.

d. Duration (How long did it take?)

The evaluation process varies depending on the projects and their budgets. Thus, the time they could use for the evaluation differs as well. Since one of the key questions is “how” evaluation was implemented, factors related to the decision of methodology are taken into account.

Case Selection

As was discussed in the previous chapter, there are various types of peacebuilding projects with diverse definitions. Thus, to select applicable cases, I followed the three tasks suggested by Kaarbo and Beasley (1999); 1) choosing comparable cases, 2) choosing cases with a wide range of dependent variables, and 3) choosing cases with alternative variables in case there was another explanation for the research question. Below, the criteria for the case selection are listed. The numbers one to four are for responding to task 1). Task 2) dealt with the numbers five to seven. Lastly, task 3) is covered by number eight which could be an alternative explanation of differences in evaluation processes.

1. They are project reports of peacebuilding activities in South Sudan.
2. The projects ended until the final evaluation (decided not to choose a mid-term report).

3. All the cases are selected from the documents issued public and accessible to everyone.
4. All cases are projects with activities for reconciliation, cohesion, or dialogue.
5. Each project was conducted by different organizations.
6. All projects have different evaluators.
7. All projects have different donors.
8. All projects have different durations for conducting the research.

For one, the geographical location is limited to South Sudan because each conflict has a different context which makes cases incomparable. Therefore, choosing projects implemented in the same country should make this comparison more reliable. However, the project site at the regional level in South Sudan has not been considered in the case selection process. Thus, it should be noted that all regions did not necessarily experience the same events in the past.

Regarding the timing of evaluation, as mentioned in Chapter 2-1, there are a number of evaluation methods depending on the time it was conducted. In this research, the final report was selected because it would be the most suitable one to see what they consider as an “achievement”, for example, compared to the mid-term evaluation. The impact evaluation could have been the option as well; however, the impact evaluation may not be included in all of the project planning, because the impact evaluation is for measuring the long-term impact of the projects. In addition, the impact of the project could differ depending on the length of the interval they had before the evaluation, and thus, I decided to select only the final evaluation.

The number three listed above, this the criteria to separate reports for internal learning and accountability. The report issued publicly may have certain intentions not only accountabilities to their donors or taxpayers but also utilize evaluation as a tool of PR in terms of dissemination of their achievement. Based on this idea, the report shared only internally and released publicly could differ to a great extent. I judged it would be better to compare reports with the same function and intention. Since the representation of the achievement is one of the main aspects of this study, only the reports accessible for everyone uploaded online are the subject of this study.

In criteria four, I defined the scope of the research by selecting the projects based on their contents. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, there are diverse types of “peacebuilding projects” nowadays, yet not all of them directly address peacebuilding but indirectly contribute to it. Although projects for economic development, employment, or infrastructure, as such could be imperative factors for peace, this research chose the projects which essentially emphasize “reconciliation”, “cohesion”, and “dialogue”. By doing so, this research enables us to analyze the

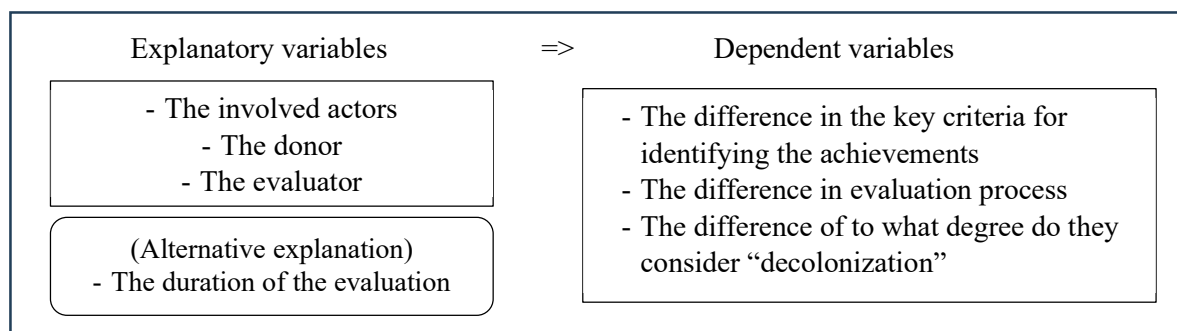
evaluation of peace through a qualitative approach not only a quantitative approach with numbers or data.

As explained above, criteria five to seven are to be able to compare the cases based on the variables selected. Lastly, the number eight is for the duration of the evaluation which is considered as alternative ideas.

Operationalization of Variables

In this research, the hypothesis is “The measurement and representation of peace differ depending on the involved actors, donors, and evaluators”. It means that the former part of the sentence is the dependent variable, and the latter is the explanatory variable. Furthermore, in this research, the dependent variable is separated into three hypotheses as well. The first one is, that there should be a difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievement of the peacebuilding. The second one is evaluation process should be different, followed by the last one, some organizations considered decolonization greater degree than others.

<Figure 3: Hypothesis of the explanatory and dependent variables>



In the context of social science, operationalization means “specifying the exact operations involved in measuring a variable” (Babbie, 2014). In this research, therefore, operationalization should start with defining dependent variables and operations for measuring them. However, it is worth noting that not all of the dependent variables in this study are measurable by number.

Those three variables can be operationalized in the following way: the first one is the differences in the evaluation process are simply compared by listing up. It would be interesting to compare their reasoning for why they selected their evaluation methodology. Secondly, a difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievements. To make this dependent variable measurable, the key question is “What is considered an achievement in each report?”. Thus, the theories of change (ToCs) for each project are compared to make it clear what they are aiming at. In addition to this, the words “success story” or “good practice” were extracted which are examples of what they consider as success. Lastly, the difference of to what degree they consider decolonization can be

seen in how often they mentioned the importance of the participatory approach, even more, “decolonization”. In case they took action for the active involvement of people in the community (those who are influenced by the projects), it would be also essential to make sure if those efforts actually mean decolonization, or just as a formality.

<Table 1: Operationalization>

	Operationalize (How to visualize the subjects to compare)
The difference in the evaluation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing the method by listing with emphasis on their reasoning for selecting a specific methodology
The difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extracting the words hinting at their representation of achievement of peacebuilding; “good practice” or “success story”. Comparing the theory of change (ToC) in order to comprehend the goals, they are aiming at.
The difference of to what degree they consider “decolonization”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally frequency that they mentioned decolonization or the importance of a participatory approach.

The operationalizations for some variables are more precise than the others. Moreover, it is different from how the operationalization works, however, a case study qualitatively like this often uses transcripts, diaries, etc., and the interpretations depend on the researchers. In other words, the data are judged from a subjective perspective (Babbie, 2014). However, determining the potential categorization of variables in advance is still valid and helpful to increase the reliability of the research (Ibid).

Analyze cases based on coding and compare the data for building theory

After the data were collected according to the operationalization, I demonstrated the differences of each case. Based on the operationalization, the data were compared, and the academic theories laid a foundation for the findings of the comparison.

3-2. Limitations

Before starting the comparison of cases, I will point out a limitation of this research. First of all, the final evaluation reports do not necessarily reflect impartial positions. As it was mentioned before, the main purpose of the evaluation is “accountability” and “learning”. If the evaluation report is written for accountability to the stakeholders and a large indefinite number of audience on the internet, they probably will not mention the flaws of the projects. If the evaluation report is for learning and improvement of the project implementation, the report is mostly for internal use and

might share failures during the projects. All the reports utilized in this comparison are found online and accessible by everyone, and thus, those reports can only show narrow areas of the evaluation results. However, since “selecting comparable cases” is an important factor here, I decided to select those that are most likely for accountability purposes. This narrow scope of the evaluation report can be a limitation. Moreover, the challenging environment for the evaluation should be considered when it comes to evaluation in conflict-affected settings. The project’s implementation will be affected by external factors significantly. That may hinder evaluators from getting the information they need.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARISON OF EVALUATION REPORT

4-1. Analysis of Reports

In this chapter, detailed explanations of each project and an evaluation process are introduced.

4-1-1. Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC)

This section has been written based on the information in “SUMMATIVE EVALUATION FINAL REPORT”(John Kimote & Philip Deng, 2020) and their project website (UNDP, n.d.).

<Project description>

The project aims to reduce and mitigate community-level conflict and insecurity through investment in initiatives to address the root causes of the instability of the community. This project took three approaches which are; 1) the community security approach with a focus on local mechanism for peace through inclusive peace committees, mitigation, and dialogues; 2) the social cohesion approach which engage in the empowerment of vulnerable group, women, and youth while reinforcing structure for peace at the national level; 3) the last approach is the support of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) while ensuring the involvement of diverse stakeholders such as community, women, youth as well as institutions. According to the project document of PaCC (UNDP, n.d.), a variety of activities took place, and they were along with the three approaches mentioned above. For instance, the activities relevant to the first approach are to build capacities among local people to solve conflict peacefully in the traditional way through training, conferences, and dialogues. This also addresses gender-based violence and psychological trauma. The activities associated with the second approach are building common interests and interdependency in the divided communities through projects that support media activities, youth initiatives, or establishing markets. As is shown, most of the activities emphasized dialogue, conflict resolution, cohesion, or peacebuilding.

Each of the activities had different beneficiaries, for example, an activity to reinforce local mechanisms benefitted a total of 1,078 (28 percent female) in all the five conflict clusters; another activity trained 404 counselors for providing psychosocial support to 562 new community members; there is also an activity empowered youth who tend to be the initiator of violence by offering training to become entrepreneur and activities for the social cohesion. In this report, the number of beneficiaries is not necessarily explained and instead, simply mentioned that PaCC held a conference or provided training.

<Involved actors>

- Beneficiaries – Varies depending on the activities offered by the project.
- Organizations Implemented projects – United Nations Development Plan (UNDP)
- Donor – Sweden, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Japan, United Nations Peacebuilding Funds (PBF)
- Partnership - Government of South Sudan
- Participants of the evaluation -
 - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): UNDP Project staff, Implementation partners, South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC), Bureau of Community Security and Small Arms Control (BCSSAC), National Dialogue Secretariat member/Sudd institute, Juba University National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), SGBV victims
 - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): In the three conflict clusters, 24 focus groups with approximately eight people which include at least 30% of them are women. The groups were; Peace committees, youth groups, women groups, IDPs, Returnees, Psychosocial and economic empowerment groups, and community members at interdependency projects.
 - Observation checklist: People in the three conflict clusters in Aweil/Marial Bai, Bentiu, and Bor
 - Individual Survey: 450 beneficiaries of community members in Aweil, Bor, and Bentiu who are selected according to the sampling method

<Evaluators>

The evaluation was undertaken by an external team of two Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) consultants, One national consultant, and one international consultant. They independently evaluate the project using UNDP and donor evaluation guidelines. To ensure the quality, an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)¹ was established, and they approved an inception report, data collection tools, and qualitative question guides submitted by the evaluation team.

¹ It is common to see an evaluation reference group in the evaluation process of International Organizations. For example, World Food Programme (WFP) defined “An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is a group of key internal and external evaluation stakeholders who review and comments on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR), Inception and Evaluation reports. The ERG members act as advisors during the evaluation process, are not taking key decisions about the evaluation.” (WFP Office of Evaluation, 2018)

<Duration of Evaluation>

The evaluation took place for 40 working days (total of 50 days), from November 2019 to January 2020, however, the project itself started in April 2017 and was planned to end in March 2020. According to the evaluation guideline by UNDP, the final evaluation should be done a year prior to completion (Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP, 2021).

<How was the evaluation executed?>

The project evaluation took place in all project locations, Juba, and five conflict clusters. The evaluation utilized the four out of six criteria suggested by OECD², to investigate if the project achieved intended results or not. Moreover, it aims to see to what extent the project contributed to the improvement of community peace and cohesion, gender equality issues, human rights, and enhancing partnerships among different stakeholders.

- Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluation applied a hybrid approach of qualitative and quantitative research. There were five sources of data: Desk Review, KIIs, FGDs, Observation Checklist, and Individual Survey. During the evaluation process, they conducted 30 KIIs, 24 FGDs which had 8-10 participants with at least 30% of women in each group, and a survey with 450 households. The 30 participants of the KIIs were selected intentionally from the major stakeholders of the projects whereas the members for the FGDs were selected randomly with support by UNDP field staff. As for sampling of the FGDs, they divided beneficiaries into subgroups called Strata and selected them based on their gender, and the types of initiatives they benefited from, or were involved in. Lastly, the selection of the participants for the individual survey used certain sampling methods resulting in choosing 150 households per cluster (which makes sum 450 households in total).

- What criteria did they use to measure their achievement? (The difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievements)

Here, I have shared my findings about the analysis written in the Evaluation Findings chapter. Their evaluation criteria were the following five; Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Cross-cutting Issues (Human rights and Gender Equality). Evaluation questions for each criterion were cited respectively. It is important to mention that the number of criteria was

² The evaluation was conducted in 2019-2020 and the update on the evaluation criteria by OECD, which added a new criterion, was 2019.

inconsistent throughout this final evaluation report. There was “Coherence” as a sixth criterion in some parts of this report, meanwhile, other parts said there are only five criteria. I decided not to include “Coherence” as a criterion in this research because the evaluation questions were not provided.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Relevance”

- *To what extent was the project in line with the national development priorities, the country program’s outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs?*
- *To what extent does the project contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country program outcome?*
- *To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project’s design?*
- *To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the human rights-based approach?*

The first two evaluation questions are based on international or national levels of standard, such as SDGs or the Country program. On the other hand, the third question seems to be for the betterment of the project, in other words, for UNDP’s internal learning process. The last one somewhat overlapped with the last evaluation criterion, Cross-cutting Issues.

Although it was not listed in the evaluation questions, they explained the relevance to the community needs in the evaluation findings. The report explained the result of the evaluation from three aspects: relevance to the community needs, National and South Sudan UN country team’s (UNCT) interim cooperation framework (2016-2017), and Country and Local Context. Overall, activities such as “creating dialogue mechanisms, establishing processes, and implementing interventions appropriate for increasing local-level social cohesion, conflict resolution, and transforming conflict resolution into economic opportunities” (p.23) were considered “relevant and appropriate to the needs of targeted communities and supported linkages with national and UNCT priorities” (p.22). The relevance to the national context was mentioned as well. Indeed, the survey result indicated that 74.9% of respondents answered that the project was either ‘extremely relevant’ (29%) or ‘very relevant’ (45.9%). This aspect, “Relevance to the community needs” was explained effectively with quantitative data from the survey followed by qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs. It also provided reasons for how and why intervention was appropriate, however, here are some questions regarding the validity of this survey question; what it means with “extremely relevant”

and “very relevant” in the survey, and what are the differences between those two options to answer, and why did the rest of the respondents answer either “moderately relevant”, “slightly relevant” or “totally irrelevant”. Those clarifications should have been done, because “relevance” is a quite vague expression and could differ from person to person.

Furthermore, they explained how the project was relevant to the national and UNCT priorities and the national context. It is not hard to assume that relevancy to those documents was already assessed before this project was implemented. In other words, a project cannot be implemented if there is no relevance to that strategic scheme in South Sudan (at least in theory). Thus, some of the questions could have addressed how the project contributed to societal change as a result of implementation and how those changes are relevant to people’s needs. In order to evaluate project results (not the project programming process) this is an essential question to ask here. Lastly, when we look at this criteria from the perspectives of everyday peace, it is also important to ask how those projects are relevant to people’s idea of peace not only relevance to the idea of “peace” in the project documents.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Effectiveness”

- *To what extent did the project contribute to the country's program outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and national development priorities?*
- *To what extent were the project outputs achieved? Were there any unintended or unexpected results achieved by the project that can be documented as lessons?*
- *What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended country program outputs and outcomes?*
- *To what extent does the project also relate or interact with other projects in the same area*

The majority of the evaluation questions are connected to the international, and national level, or the collaboration with other projects, like the previous criteria, Relevance. One out of four questions asked were about the project outputs achieved.

This evaluation criterion was composed of two approaches to show the achievement of the project. The first half was the summary of the achievements based on survey data, and the evaluators mentioned some answers from KIIs and FGDs to focus on comments from respondents to share their perceptions. Several successful results were described. On the other hand, it was not clear if those examples were intentionally selected to highlight the successes or if all activities’ results in this project were covered equally. Moreover, this part of the report did not mention the objectives of projects (such as project outcome, output, and activity), though effectiveness is closely

tied to those objectives. To identify if the project was effective in achieving goals, it would have been natural to compare what was the expected outcome and what is the reality after the intervention. Therefore, it demonstrates that the effectiveness here does not necessarily mean how successful the project was in comparison to the original plan.

In the second half of this evaluation criterion, “Contribution to longer-term results” was shown with survey data and graphs. Since effectiveness was measured with the set of indicators here, the “Results Framework/Indicator Matrix” should be introduced according to the project document (UNDP, 2017). There are three outputs for this project, and each output has four indicators. Those are, for example, “Indicator 1: Number of social and economic initiatives implemented at local levels”. Before the project, they conducted a baseline assessment, and the target number for each indicator was set as well. In the report, it was explained how the survey answer has changed from the baseline survey. It gives objective perspectives on the project results, and despite the contents in the former half, the indicators also showed some of the numbers dropped down.

In the project document, the process of deciding those indicators is written as follows; “Reconciliation and Social Cohesion Barometer: Through consultation and collaboration with peace actors, UNDP will lead a process to build consensus on key indicators and sub-indicators to measure reconciliation and social cohesion. Every two years, UNDP will undertake the assessment which will be used as a basis for mutual accountability, advocacy, and policy dialogue” (Ibid, p.14). Based on this explanation, those indicators were revisited regularly with peace actors, yet the involvement of the beneficiaries of the projects or the people at the project site was not mentioned.

Another thing worth mentioning here is that there could be different levels of results among the indicators. For example, the indicators for output two were presented as listed below.

<Table 2: PaCC Output 2 and Indicators >

Output two	Relationships improved between divided communities through projects that build on common interests
Indicator 1	Number of social and economic initiatives implemented at local levels (and targeting women)
Indicator 2	The proportion of the population perceiving a decrease in inter-community conflict and violence (percent)
Indicator 3	Number of youth groups formed and involved in social and economic activities
Indicator 4	Number of migration conferences resulting in the signing of new migration agreements between migrating pastoralist tribes and host communities

(Based on; John Kimote & Philip Deng, 2020 ; UNDP, 2017)

Indicators 1 and 3 are numbers of initiatives or groups created as a part of the activities according to what this project originally planned. On the contrary, indicators 2 and 4 are the result of the activities carried out during the project such as the perception of reduction of violence in their community or the agreement after holding a conference. It is important to note that this indicator merges two different levels of the output as a measurement of one criterion.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Efficiency”

- *To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?*
- *To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?*

The questions seem reasonable to investigate the efficiency of the project and this part of the report should be the one that plays an essential role in the accountability to the donors. This evaluation criterion was written from two perspectives. One is cost efficiency, and the other is the partnership with the other actors for the projects. The financial perspective mentioned the importance of collaboration with other international entities and the flexibility and responsive action of the UNDP team. It also mentioned deploying qualified South Sudanese nationals as a facilitator of the training and it resulted in being “less costly compared to hiring international facilitators” (p.6, 35). From the partnership perspective, the collaboration with various partners in different levels of society was mentioned as a factor of the betterment of the project implementation, however, there were no further details written here.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Sustainability”

- *To what extent the project initiatives will continue in the future and; to what extent are the local authorities and beneficiaries involved and own the project interventions?*
- *To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?*
- *Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs and the project’s contributions to country program outputs and outcomes?*
- *To what extent are lessons learned being documented by the project team continually and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?*
- *To what extent do UNDP interventions have well-designed and well-planned exit strategies?*

Even though the analysis does not necessarily correspond to the evaluation questions, both the contribution and challenges of the project for sustainability were pointed out. While this report stated the training and capacity-building activities conducted in the community would remain and stimulate peaceful conflict resolution, it also concerned the lack of the capacity for the local community to maintain or scale up the newly introduced approaches. The success of this project and the reduction of conflicts can be maintained otherwise. The report also stated that sustainable continuation of economic initiatives is necessary since the evaluators identified that the majority of the conflicts were caused by socioeconomic factors rather than factors related to ideological differences. The lack of capacity of national entities including the government is indicated too, however, the project could not support strengthening national government partners' capacity due to the conditions given by the donors. This may be a unique struggle for PaCC unlike other projects selected here as cases.

One question here is how many times or how often capacity-building activities need to be held if the project expects the community to maintain the conflict resolution mechanism. This question applies to not only capacity-building activities but also, training or workshops. If “sustainable” means some impacts last decades, most likely a 10-day training would not be sufficient because, as we all are aware, establishing “peace” is indeed a long journey.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Cross-cutting Issues”

Human rights

- *To what extent human rights issues are incorporated in project design, implementation, and monitoring.*
- *To what extent have poor, indigenous, and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of UNDP in the country?*

The analysis of the report did not answer the question, “to what extent” human rights issues are considered throughout the projects, but it mentioned the four principles of the Human Rights Based Approach (Non-discriminatory, Transparency, Participation, and Accountability) were applied. Based on surveys, KIIs, and FGDs, it appears that community people perceive that the numbers of SGBV decreased thanks to the effort from the humanitarian partners. The analysis cited the message from an SGBV survivor in Bor as a “human story” as a consequence of the capacity-building initiatives and dialogue mechanisms. Nevertheless, considering the meaning of these criteria, the topic to highlight here should be “how” and “to what degree” are those human rights-related principles considered during a project, not only the success story as mentioned.

Gender equality

- *To what extent has gender equality has been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project?*
- *Is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality?*
- *To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?*

As is explained below, due to the restriction UNDP has in their evaluation guidelines, all evaluation questions somewhat touched questions and topics related to gender equality. It is not only about the process of the analysis but also methodologies in the evaluation employed a gender-sensitive approach.

Summary of the Evaluation Findings

To sum up, I highlight a few findings by analyzing this report. Firstly, there is no clear structural correspondence between the theory of change or the evaluation questions and the way they summarized the achievement through the project. Even though the theory of change and expected outcomes are explicitly shown in the report, the evaluation result did not refer to those structures. Secondly, the role of evaluation questions could have been improved since it did not match with the project contents very much. There is a guideline for the evaluation of the project implemented by UNDP. It suggested a list of evaluation questions and evaluators employ those questions in various projects by customizing them. The guideline explained that a set of questions should be tailored according to the key concerns of each project. At the same time, it indicated necessary questions such as; “Include at least one evaluation question related to gender equality and women’s empowerment, and ideally at least one per evaluation criterion.” (Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP, 2021, p.14). In other words, the evaluation process in general is unified and operationalized to a great extent for the whole UNDP system. This is very much understandable in terms of consistency as well as comparability of the results between different projects in UNDP. However, if evaluators had had more freedom to choose questions and evaluation criteria, the findings could have been more unique and deeper, and capture the impact of the project on local communities well. Thirdly, it is slightly doubtful that there were very few comments that gave critical or negative perspectives on this project. This fact could imply that this evaluation report expects donor countries as primary readers or that the respondents of this evaluation were not able to give negative insights. If the final evaluation report is for donors, this evaluation focuses on accountability over internal learning. If the respondents were not able to give negative comments,

either methodology, questions, or the members of the evaluation team should be reconsidered. Especially, vague questions with a 1-5 scale can be inductive such as “To what extent do you feel the project was relevant and responded to your community needs?”. It is natural that 4 or 5 is more comfortable to answer when you get financial benefits if they do not have strong feelings against this project.

However, there are some important factors to recognize as well. Throughout the research, it appears that there are (a lot of) restrictions in terms of the format of evaluation including evaluation questions, timing, coherence with other UNDP projects, etc. Moreover, the implementation of the project itself faces challenges due to the lack of the budget, the donor’s opinion, or the weather. Particularly, the unique feature of this case is that multiple donors have a great influence on UNDP’s decision-making process. The final evaluation report, therefore, indicated to us how much coordination it requires to conduct a project as an international entity.

- How do they make sure to decolonize the evaluation process?

Overall, there was no description of either decolonization or local turn during the evaluation process. Moreover, most of the evaluation questions and criteria were along with the global standard. Considering the number of beneficiaries, involved partners, the area they intervened, and their budget, it is not easy to identify what is considered “peace” for each community. Having standardized criteria for the evaluation could help UNDP evaluate its performance globally, indeed. However, it would be also essential to inquire about whether those international and country-level standardized indicators reflect people’s opinions.

As mentioned in the criteria of Efficiency, the explanation of cost efficiency suggested the old structure of international development aid may remain and influence the recruitment for the evaluation. This is hinted at by a sentence such as “Juba University NTLI deployed qualified South Sudanese nationals and this proved to be less costly compared to hiring international facilitators.” (p.6, 35). The facilitators play a crucial part in this project and thus this should not be compromised because of the cost. Due to this description, it is not clear if this project was meant to hire South Sudanese nationals for their extensive knowledge of the local context and to remove a hurdle for community people to participate in training, or just for financial reasons. In the context of decolonization, this is something worth mentioning here.

4-1-2. The Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS) project

This section has been written based on the information in their project report, “Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan evaluation report” (Management Systems International (MSI), 2019).

<Project description>

RfPSS is a project guided by USAID but implemented by a US-based international non-profit organization, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) with the support of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) which is a local faith-based organization. The USAID’s implementing partners and their counterparts in South Sudan are expected readers of this report, however, it is stated that the primary reader is USAID, particularly the Democracy and Governance Team to get insights. This suggests that this whole project is designed by USAID and this evaluation will demonstrate lessons learned through the evaluation for future project designing. Therefore, PfrSS is in line with a part of USAID’s South Sudan Operational Framework, although they did not implement the project. In terms of implementation organizations, CRS is an international organization that works closely with SSCC and SSCC is a national-level church-led organization cooperating with Inter-Church Committees (ICCs) which are organizations at state and regional levels.

In 2015, the SSCC developed the Action Plan for Peace (APP) which “is the home-grown and Church-led strategy of the SSCC, comprehensively addressing the root causes and long-term effects of conflict through Advocacy, Neutral Forums, Healing, and Reconciliation” (SSCC, 2023). On the contrary, PfrSS aimed at building “a more peaceful, prosperous and reconciled South Sudan, based on inclusive citizen engagement at all levels, attention to past wrongs and the implementation of a just and comprehensive peace accord”, which highlights the wider involvements of citizens to the projects and the enforcement of the accord. To be incorporated with APP, PfrSS applies APP’s four approaches in their major pillars of activities; advocacy, reconciliation, neutral forms, and lastly, organizational strengthening by supporting the enhancement of institutional structures. Although the Strategic Objectives (SOs) and Intermediate Results (IRs) of RfPSS set by USAID are not exactly the same as APP, they are tightly connected. Following the important four factors of APP (advocacy, reconciliation, neutral forms, and organizational strengthening), there are several activities they conducted.

<Figure 4: Strategic Objectives by USAID >

- SO1:** Participation of South Sudanese communities in inclusive grassroots peace and reconciliation processes strengthened.
- IR1.1 SSCC has improved operational systems.
(APP Organizational Strengthening Pillar)
- IR1.2 Staff have adequate capacity to lead reconciliation and healing processes.
(APP Reconciliation Pillar)
- IR1.3 South Sudanese communities have improved social and community relationships.
(APP Neutral Forums and Reconciliation Pillar)
- SO2:** SSCC and other institutions incorporated best practices in conflict management and advocate for inclusivity.
- IR2.1 SSCC and other institutions identified best practices in conflict management and reconciliation processes.
(APP Advocacy Pillar)
- SO3:** Views and needs of South Sudanese people are integrated into peace negotiation processes.
- IR3.1 Increased ability of SSCC and its partners to influence peace negotiation process.
(APP Advocacy and Neutral Forums Pillar)

(Cited from: Management Systems International, 2019, p.7)

For instance, RfPSS encouraged church leaders to be involved in the negotiation that is associated with the Revitalized Agreement as a part of their advocacy activities. In terms of the reconciliation activities, RfPSS supported church leaders to join the inter/intra communal reconciliation process and aimed at conducting 181 conversations. RfPSS is also dedicated to providing training for the SSCC to strengthen its institutional capacity with special emphasis on financial management.

<Project site>

- The former Lakes, Jonglei, and Western Equatoria states, Juba County in South Sudan

<Involved actors>

- Beneficiaries - 1.25 million men, women, and youth, including those engaged, trained, listened to and supported via direct consultations or mass media channels.
- Organizations Implemented projects - Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Donor – USAID
- Partner organization - South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), Inter-Church Committee
- Participants of the evaluation - Three facilitated focus group discussions (FFGD), one each with CRS, SSCC, and ICC representatives. The members of those groups are as follows;
Youth Leaders and Participants/Female Participants/ Community Elders/ Community Peace

Facilitators. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with project managers and staff, particularly for senior leadership at the national and state levels.

<Evaluator>

- The report was prepared by Management Systems International (MSI). A team of three experts on South Sudan oversaw this report. They have the expertise to enable the grounding of empirical evidence within its social and political context. One has worked in South Sudan since 2008 and was primarily responsible for the methodology design, overseeing and coordinating the data collection, providing briefings, and writing the final report. The other two were both from the University of Juba. They not only contributed to the context analysis and provided their insights in the evaluation, but also contributed to organizing interviews, FFDGs, and field research by sharing their network.

<Duration of Evaluation>

- It took nearly six weeks of field research and two weeks of desk-based work. Initially, the evaluation was scheduled for three weeks, however, it was extended once the evaluation team realized that that was not sufficient time to conduct the evaluation. That resulted in more site visits without forcing extra effort on the evaluation team. The duration of the project itself was not specified. However, it was written that some of the activities started in March 2018 while this report was issued in January 2019. Thus, the duration of some activities in this project was approximately a year.

<How was evaluation executed?>

- Methodology of the evaluation

They had an evaluation design with three approaches: context analysis, organizational assessment, and case study. However, not all of the three approaches were used to analyze all of the evaluation criteria (Figure 5). Data was collected through literature review, KIIs, and Facilitated Focus Group Discussions (FFGDs)³ thus, this is a mixed-method approach of qualitative and quantitative, and using primary and secondary sources. The evaluation team conducted 95 interviews across six locations. This report, it was elaborated on why was this design for the evaluation used. Those three approaches; context analysis, organizational assessment, and case study, are great tools to assess necessary criteria efficiently and allow the evaluator to have

³ Facilitated Focus Group Discussions are FDGs with facilitators. In this evaluation for RfPSS, the facilitators actively engaged in the discussion with assessment tools to obtain insights from the discussion participants.

objectivity by interacting with multiple stakeholders. Hybrid methods of data collection tools are employed to support data validity.

<Figure 5: Evaluation Methodology in RfPSS>

TABLE 1: GETTING TO ANSWERS

	Q1 – Participation	Q2 – Relevance	Q3 – Strengths and Weaknesses	Q4 – Assumptions	Q5 – Emphasis	Q6 – Effectiveness	Q7 – Lessons
Context analysis		X	X	X	X		X
Organizational assessment			X			X	X
Case studies (KIs and FFGDs)	X	X	X	X		X	X

(Management Systems International, 2019, p.9)

Overall, this design aimed to cover as many perspectives as possible. And therefore, the evaluators acknowledge that this evaluation report contains people’s various opinions including negative aspects of the projects. The details of the context analysis, the organizational assessment by using FFGD, the case study analysis, and the interviews are shared in the annex of the evaluation report, yet the details of the sampling method are not explained in detail. The report explained there were no major issues that needed to be considered during this evaluation. However, the miscoordination of information management between partner organizations is addressed briefly. It appears that storing records of interventions at local levels could have helped with deepening the evaluation analysis.

- What criteria did they use to measure their achievement? (The difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievements)

In their “Scope of evaluation”, they have seven criteria for the evaluation: “participation”, “relevance”, “strength and weaknesses”, “assumptions”, “emphasis”, and “effectiveness”. There are several evaluation questions for each criterion, it is not clear how the topics were selected, and why those questions are important to inquire.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Participation”

- *What strategies has RfPSS used to increase citizen and community participation in peace and reconciliation processes in South Sudan?*

- *How effective have those strategies been, including for various stakeholder groups, such as women, youth, traditional leaders, faith-based groups, and other civil society organizations (CSOs)?*
- *Do citizens continue to engage in community and national peace and reconciliation initiatives through the APP?*

Although this report covered most of the answers to the questions listed above, it is not clear to what extent was the continuation of the project participation addressed. The report explicitly stated that they could not find impacts of activities relevant to the radio stations through their evaluation. The report mentioned the second strategy, the community conversations, with an abandonment explanation of local context and messages told by the participants. The report spotted several pitfalls of the structures of community conversations such as the perceptions of this activity from people, the diversity in participants (also people who cannot talk/are allowed to talk in the conversation), and power dynamics among people.

First, the report revealed that participants in this conversation did not recognize that this activity was not conducted by CRS, but by SSCC, ICC, and APP-related activities. Although this activity was planned to be implemented by the local and regional level organizations, the perception from communities was just “another international organization” and they were less motivated to participate. Moreover, some people told the evaluator that the meetings were too short. They expressed dissatisfaction as those meetings should have been longer if they were to address fundamental issues. Another thing pointed out was the underrepresentation of women among participants. The evaluation process digs this topic deeper which consequently showed that even though women were attending the meeting, they might be working as a cook or not being able to talk for as long time as men do due to the religious institutions by doctrine, structure, and the process. Regarding gender balance, one church leader mentioned during the evaluation that it is hard to find eligible female participants due to the required English literacy skills. This evaluation also addressed the unbalance of power among the churches. Since some churches have dominant power over others, there can be barriers for participants with a variety of religious backgrounds. Moreover, the evaluation shared that the government-led National Dialogue and the community conversation are divided because SSCC perceives National Dialogue as lacking the involvement of opposition political entities.

This evaluation gave deep insight into the project result from various points of view. The provided explanation of the local context based on the interview made it clear why the project did not work as planned. The description of the evaluation also included the comparison between

several regions which helped readers to comprehend the different situations depending on the community.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Relevance”

- *How relevant is the APP to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in South Sudan at both the national and local levels?*

Here, the evaluation concluded that there is a certain relevance between APP and activities of RfPSS, however, the relationship between them is not simple. Essentially, the evaluation pointed out the lack of ownership of the local church, the SSCC’s positioning, and the church leaders’ role in diverse conflict contexts.

As well as the “participation” part, the evaluation contained voices from stakeholders in a pretty straightforward manner. A particularly interesting thing was addressed in terms of the lack of ownership in the evaluation. Primarily, the APP was established by SSCC, however, local stakeholders perceive this initiative as CRS’s project, which is an international organization, rather than a local church-led action. The dissatisfaction of the local organization can be seen through the comments such as “The SSCC complained that international partners, including CRS, took the APP and its work plan and then used its activities to raise money, thereby “hijacking” the APP” (p.15). In this report, international intervention was criticized, due to the hardships for SSCC to situate themselves in the project. For instance, the APP could be developed to have a solid structure as a reconciliation process once SSCC internally discusses strategy around it such as how to expand projects. However, the international organizations raise funds without input from SSCC but under the name of SSCC even though SSCC has not decided on those strategies. The evaluators found that it resulted in putting them in a difficult position. Lastly, it is discovered that church leaders are only able to actively engage in the mediation process in a specific context. Otherwise, however, they either step back from the situation or are excluded by the other actors.

This section addressed various levels of relevancy of the project to the project goals. It suggested that it depends on the context, the structural issues of the project implementation, and the critics of how the intervention was carried out. Overall, the analysis focuses on backgrounds and contexts very well by listening to a variety of stakeholders’ voices. However, although the evaluation shed light on different perspectives, it did not include the voice of the community (who participated in the activities). Moreover, the analysis did not explain which data collection approach was useful to find what, as context analysis and Case studies were used to explore this evaluation criteria.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Strengths and weaknesses”

- *What major strengths, weaknesses, successes, and challenges are apparent in RfPSS implementation, including in interacting with SSCC leadership and staff at the national and local levels, and in documenting such successes and challenges?*

Before the analysis starts, the report clarified that only strengths and weaknesses are elaborated in the report, since successes and challenges overlap with them to a great extent. In other words, the report indicates what it considers as “success” in this criterion. They consider mostly three things as success. First is the improvement of the organizational structure of the SSCC and ICCs. CRS members mentioned that RfPSS increases the confidence among church leaders as well as the SSCC’s presence. Although there are some discrepancies between ICCs’ and SSCC’s opinions on organizational capacity, which essentially means the difference between national and regional, state and district level, SSCC is developing its organizational strength according to the Organizational Assessment Tools including FFGDs. Another success they mentioned was church played an important role in the community with wide reach to a variety of stakeholders and being a more inclusive entity regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity. The evaluators introduced the CRS staff’s comment here. Nevertheless, it was not clear what analytical tool led to this analysis. Lastly, the report introduced a Community Peace Facilitators’ (CPFs)⁴ comment that says the trauma healing process is the strength of the community conversation. Interestingly, CPF also mentioned the appreciation of the food provided for the activities. CRS staff also commented that community conversations went well because the facilitation was done by community members.

On the contrary, the project sustainability, efficiency, and impact, especially in terms of the implementation of the project according to the plan and outcome were questioned as well as the insufficient system for the monitoring/evaluation/assessment. Moreover, the organizational structure of SSCC was very hierarchal and the decision-making process did not involve a local level, while ICC only had a limited capacity. This weakness was also pointed out in the opinions of the stakeholders.

⁴ Community Peace Facilitators (CPFs) are facilitators of the community conversations. They are member of the community as well. Community Conversations are the activities offered to the community for engagement in peace and reconciliation.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Assumptions”

- *Are the original assumptions put forward in the RfPSS design and theory of change still valid, given the changes to the conflict and political context in South Sudan since RfPSS started?*

This evaluation criterion was written based on the ToC (Theory of Change) and the flaws in the theory. The evaluators stated in the “assumption” criterion, as follows; “The evaluation team concluded that the flaws in the assumptions of the RfPSS were problematic in the previous context and require adjustment in any future intervention of this nature.” (p.22). In other words, this analysis was concluded based on context analysis and case studies and needs to be adjusted before applying it to new program/project designing. That being said, they pointed out several flaws in ToC, such as 1) a limited impact of civilian’s voice on politics due to a deep overlap between the biases and political opinions that civil society has and the ones that political bodies have, 2) a lack of process to share knowledge related to the transitional justice (no evidence found that RfPPS contributed to the transitional justice), 3) a flaw in the logic of linking local voices to national peace processes, and 4) the lack of considerations about conflict sensitivity⁵. This evaluation explained those flaws by comparing the hypothesis and the consequences. This is an imperative and effective way to use such a theoretical framework for internal learning since reflecting on the hypothesis and the result can help the stakeholders to develop their project design next time. As well as the other evaluation criteria, this section also shared respondents’ perspectives by providing examples. For instance, they revealed that community people are not necessarily concerned with state-level political conflict but rather concerned about local conflicts that highly affect their community. Thus, the assumptions of “local-level reconciliation will enable national stability and link to national unity” may not work unless RfPSS re-assesses conflict dynamics and detects the area where the local conflicts with important implications relevant to the political instability.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Emphasis”

- *Does the RfPSS maintain the right proportional emphasis across the four APP pillars, given the programmatic context?*

⁵ According to the definition by the Canadian Government the conflict sensitivity is “an approach to ensure that interventions do not unintentionally contribute to conflict, but rather, strengthen opportunities for peace and inclusion”. (Government of Canada, 2021)

The analysis of this evaluation criterion is written concisely based on the context analysis to analyze if the RfPSS emphasized the proper topics. All findings mentioned here were somewhat have been discussed already. This made me wonder how these evaluation criteria were decided and what was the initial expectation to analyze in this question.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Effectiveness”

- *What type of institutional support to the SSCC is recommended to increase its effectiveness in implementing future peacebuilding and reconciliation activities?*

This question was answered based on the Organizational Assessment and Case Studies. An interesting point of this question is that it did not ask about any cost-efficiency or time-efficiency but rather asked what types of support would have been appreciated to implement it better. It shows that the focus of “effectiveness” here is not only “effectiveness for the donor/implementing organization” but “effectiveness for the people involved in the projects”. It may seem a neat approach in terms of decolonization, however, it is questionable how this section plays a role in accountability to the donor. From this point of view, this evaluation question hints that USAID emphasizes the aspects of internal learning from this evaluation report compared to accountability.

Summary

To sum up all the analysis above, “general observations” brought up six primary issues: 1) Ownership Questions, 2) Partnership Deficits, 3) Overlap and Attribution Challenges, 4) Flaws in the Design L, 5) Mixed Understandings of What ‘The Church’ Is, 6) Significant and Ambiguous Role of The Government. Some of them are about the project design itself but others are about the issues in the field.

The voice from the field was very well conveyed throughout the report. Especially the weakness of the organizational structure and the communication between the CRS, SSCC, and ICC was thoroughly written. Some people in the community thought that the CRS project was the one conducting the project, not SSCC. They thought RfPSS was an intervention from another INGO because they were too used to having international interventions with similar activities. SSCC and ICC found it problematic that ownership was not clarified well enough. Another example is the voices from women who said their representation in some of the RfPSS’ activities was not sufficient and women’s voice was not heard. For example, female participants were sometimes assigned as cooks even though they attended a meeting, they were allowed to talk for only a limited

time or were not able to share their opinions in the larger discussion groups which were dominated by men. Those evaluation results supported those voices to be heard from the donor and other stakeholders. Those details are very context-dependent, and therefore, this approach of involving as many stakeholders as possible shares common values with everyday peace and local turn.

One thing to note here is that the sampling methodology was not explained in detail. It was explained that two out of three evaluators offered their network and support to organize fieldwork, interviews, and discussions which could cause an uneven distribution of respondents. Therefore, the process of the sampling should be indicated as well.

- How do they make sure to decolonize the evaluation process?

Although there were no direct expressions regarding decolonization there were some hints of their standing point as evaluators throughout the report. In one part, the evaluator wrote; “From an outsider’s perspective....” (p.21). As I have mentioned before, there were three evaluators involved in creating this report. One has worked in and in South Sudan since 2008 and the others are both from the University of Juba and have a wide enough network to offer support to coordinate KIIs, FFGDs, and Fieldwork in South Sudan. Nevertheless, they clarified they were outsiders to the people who participated in the project.

Moreover, most of their argument was supported by the comments they collected from the respondents. This proves that the report well reflected people’s voices. Both negative and positive comments were cited frequently in the report which also demonstrates that evaluators sought to be in a neutral position. Moreover, it was surprising to see some of the criticism was written forthrightly.

This project attempts to operate all activities along with the organizational structure of a Church-led entity in South Sudan from the national level, regional, and community levels. Thus, the project design itself seems to pay attention to the power balance and dynamics among actors and implement the project with the partner organizations. In terms of the decolonization in the evaluation process, this evaluation spotted not only the lack of ownership in the project but also several issues related to the communication between the local level and national levels. The evaluation report naturally included voices from diverse stakeholders in the field and all arguments were supported by them. Therefore, I consider that this report intends to capture the reality at the grassroots level.

4-1-3. “I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan”

This section is written based on the evaluation report in “Final Evaluation for “I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan” (Hereafter PLUPCS) (Search for Common Ground, 2019) and the project website by Forcier which is a consulting company implemented the evaluation (Forcier Consulting, n.d.).

<Project description>

This project aimed at “promot(ing) the ideas of tolerance and respect for diversity, peace and coexistence, and reconciliation and conflict resolution by facilitating community engagement and action around them” and implemented by Search For Common Ground (Hereafter “Search”). To achieve the goal above, the project has the following two main outcomes.

Result 1: Communities, and especially women and young men and young women, engage in constructive dialogue and action around key peacebuilding concepts that promote localized strategies for stabilization, reconciliation, and trust building.

Result 2: Media programming with a national reach amplifies and reinforces community-level peace processes to build mutual trust, inspire community confidence, and promote replication.

To achieve the first goal, key stakeholder meetings, participatory theatre performances, civil society engagement, and peace initiatives (providing small funding for conducting those activities mentioned before) took place. For the second goal, Search collaboratively produced a radio drama with local partners and also created listeners clubs which are for girls and women radio listeners to feel safe to discuss the contents of radio openly. The project was initially planned for a year and a half (15th of December 2016 – 15th of June 2018) however, “based on its success, the project was extended” (until January 2019).

<Project site>

- Bor, Mingkaman and Juba

<Involved actors>

- Beneficiaries- The main target group was vulnerable communities in Bor, Mingkaman, and Juba. Moreover, as potential beneficiaries, they mentioned groups of people in various states within the reach of the radio program.
- Organizations Implemented projects – Search for Common Ground (Search)
- Donor – Funding from the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPS) of the Canadian Government

- Participants of the evaluation – Residents in the target location, people who have listened to the radio program offered by the project, local authority representatives, community leaders, civil society representatives, and implementing staff

<Evaluator>

- Forceir Consulting evaluated this project conducted by Search. For the quantitative research, two researchers were assigned to supervise the data collection in Juba and Bor and each of them recruited six local enumerators. However, the details of the evaluation team were unclear.

<Duration of Evaluation>

- The evaluation was carried out January 30th – February 11th and it took nearly two weeks for the fieldwork to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. Although the duration is unidentified, there were desk review and data analysis processes in addition to those two. The project itself took place from December 2016 to January 2018.

<How was the evaluation executed?>

- Methodology of the evaluation

They applied a mixed-methods approach for the evaluation which included a desk review of project documentation and relevant literature, a quantitative household survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). (Figure 6)

<Figure 6: Evaluation Methodology of PLUPC>

METHOD	SOURCE	QUANTITY
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY	Target location residents	216 (108 Bor, 108 Juba)
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)	Sergeant Esther Listeners	4 (3 Juba, 1 Bor) 24 participants Juba, 8 participants Bor
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIs)	Local Authority Representative, Community Leader, Civil Society Representative, implementing staff	8 (5 Juba, 3 Bor) 2 community leaders, 3 CSO partners, 2 radio staff, 1 listener's club chair

(cited: Search for Common Ground, 2019)

As for the survey, the respondents were selected randomly whereas the participants for the FDGs and KIIs were selected from a certain group of people among the participants of the projects.

Data collection for this evaluation applied six evaluation tools; one quantitative household survey, four various KIIs, and one FDG. There were six enumerators with experience in similar quantitative research and had been to the training sessions offered by Search. Before conducting the evaluation, Forcier consulted with Search and local enumerators about the contents of the evaluation tools, and the translation of the survey into local languages. Lastly, the evaluation team mentioned a few challenges they faced during this data collection process. One is that there was only one Listener's club organized in Luri county which was supposed to be members of the FGDs. Thus, alternatively, they decided to organize FGDs with youth leaders and chiefs from other locations in Gudele and Gumbo who are not involved in the Listeners Club but who listened to the radio program. Moreover, they wrote that they found it difficult to interview people as people were mostly not at home at the time the evaluation team visited. However, they attempted to revisit the same household before selecting another household.

- What criteria did they use to measure their achievement? (The difference in the key criteria for identifying the achievements)

The evaluation used the indicators named Performance Monitoring Framework which is developed by Search by themselves. These indicators are highly connected to OECD's standards; relevance, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. As mentioned, they utilized a survey for the quantitative approach and FGDs and KIIs for the qualitative approach. However, the evaluation questions for this report are not provided to readers as the appendices were not included in the report, and there was no separate document published on their website. Therefore, I decided to refer to Terms of References⁶ instead. This elaborates on what types of questions should be asked during the evaluation. Although it is not certain that if those questions were asked during the evaluation process, it would be helpful to refer to them in order to learn what Search planned to know.

On the other hand, there was a table of the summarized project's outcome indicators which contains various approaches to measure the achievement of the projects. This share Search's ideas of what are the measurable indicators of the result of peacebuilding activities. I considered there are three levels of result among those indicators; simple output, knowledge/perception, and actions. Some indicators simply ask the number of participants in the activities, the number of activities that took place, etc. and those are less challenging to count the number. The second one, "knowledge/perception", would require the project participants' voluntary engagement in order to

⁶ Terms of reference or Request for Proposal are an explicit statement of project scope of work for a taskforce. It also describes the resources, roles and responsibilities of the evaluators and the evaluation commissioners or managers. (Australian Public Service Commission, 2021; BetterEvaluation, n.d.-c)

measure because the indicators attempt to count the number of participants who can remember the contents of activities or people's perceived influence of activities on peace. Lastly, “action” requires one step further as this indicator asks if the participant actually took action based on what they have learned through the project activities.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Relevance”

- *Did the project target the relevant population to achieve its goal of building a greater understanding and application of key concepts and themes embodied within the ARCSS?*
- *To what extent was the program able to adapt to the continuously changing context and stay relevant? Was the extension phase relevant to existing needs and the context?*
- *To what extent were communication, messages, and strategy relevant (promoting tolerance and reconciliation), credible, neutral, and inclusive of different identity groups?*

This part includes both negative and positive aspects of the project result with comments from the FGDs and KIIs to support those opinions. The structure of this section follows the evaluation questions and adequately addresses comments from respondents in the KIIs and FDGs. Many of the comments from the participants pointed out the potential involvement of more stakeholders in project activities. For instance, men or community leaders should participate in the discussions related to gender-based themes, since they need to listen to community women’s opinions to change the current gender-based dynamics in society. Based on the data they collected, evaluators also identified that this program should not consider “women” as one homogenous group. It is suggested that this should be avoided because there are minorities or people in difficult situations who require extra consideration to join the projects. In other words, this finding also indicates a lack of inclusiveness. Thus, the analysis revealed that participants of the projects are relevant populations and therefore, the comments from people about the relevancy can demonstrate positive perspectives. However, the evaluators spotted there are groups of people who are not included in the project activities but are highly relevant. This proved how important it is to select the right question and correct phrasing because the answer to “Do you think the project was relevant to you?” and the answer to “Was there everyone related to this project involved in this activity?” could have been different.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Effectiveness”

- *To what extent have the intended project's results been achieved?*
- *To what extent was Search's media-based programming effective? What was the "Reach, Resonance, and Response" (3Rs) of Search media programming?*

Although the 3Rs are not mentioned in the report, this criterion was written along with the two expected results based on both qualitative and quantitative results (FGDs and KIIs, or surveys). As mentioned in the project description, there are two intended results. The first one is communities' engagement in peacebuilding actions and the second result is establishing the media's role to promote peace. The first result was described as follows; "The first project result, ... was met through workshops, dialogues, CSO training, participatory theatre, and small-scale peace initiatives. The intended results have been achieved to the extent that those who participated in the activities participated in dialogue around peacebuilding concepts and discussed context-specific issues." (p.16) It was presented that this project achieved the intended result, however, they reported that the quantitative research indicated that there was only insignificant change before and after the project despite the positive comments from KIIs and FGDs participants on the project results. It appears that this report takes advantage of the hybrid methodology.

As for the second result, "... (it) was realized through Sergeant Esther episodes and peace-related Public Service Announcements (PSAs). The reach of these messages was limited by the limits of radio distribution in South Sudan and did not reach the parts of the country without radio access" (p.17). The analysis of this criterion revealed positive comments from participants of the activities and data from the survey. The evaluators compared this survey responses with baseline surveys, across different regions, and with the target number based on the indicators. A number of the potential room for improvement are mentioned based on the interviews, however, at the same time, the reasonings or the interpretation of the survey result were not mentioned.

Evaluation questions for the criteria "Impact"

- *What changes, intended and unintended, positive and negative, have occurred in the target population?*
- *To what extent did the project actively contribute to achieving enduring peace in South Sudan?*
- *To what extent does the project contribute to addressing existing gender-based challenges and barriers?*

This is a criterion to evaluate the longer-term impact of the project. The report summed up as follows; “The project actively contributed to achieving peace in South Sudan to the extent that it created spaces and platforms for discussion within and between groups and prompted those involved in activities to think more about peacebuilding concepts and their implementation through training and workshops.” (p.24). Overall, the ratio of people who perceive peace at both national and community levels increased, however, a number of people used peaceful means to solve their last conflict, and the levels of trust between different communities worsened or remained unchanged. In this evaluation report, there is a criterion for assessing “Effectiveness” aside from “Impact”. Thus, this section seemingly aims at analyzing the longer-term effect of the projects whereas “Effectiveness” focuses on whether the project goals are achieved or not. Therefore, the analysis puts importance on the comparison of the baseline survey and the survey for this final evaluation. The survey questions match well with the first and the second evaluation questions for “impact”. As for the third question, not only did it address gender-based challenges related to the project, but evaluators also aimed to analyze the gap in the answers depending on gender.

There are various survey questions addressing the achievement of “peace” from different aspects. Some questions like “Do you think that South Sudan, as a country, is currently at war or peace?” or “Do you think your community is at war or peace?” are connected to the respondent’s perspectives on peace, while others checking the facts through the questions such as; when was the last time they were involved in conflict, what is the most common kinds of conflict, how did respondents in different locations responded to their most recent conflict, or who were they most likely to consult in the case of conflict with another community. On the other hand, some attempt to check the relationship between them and other tribes such as; if their community would accept a neighbor from another tribe, if their community accepted marriages between people of different tribes if their communities would not accept the use of violence against someone from a different tribe, or if their communities trust members of other tribes. Unlike the other evaluation criteria, direct quotes from the survey answers or comments in the FDGs and KIIs are not provided, while quite a few survey results were shared with graphs and numbers. It helps the readers to comprehend evaluation results from quantitative perspectives, however, respondents’ insights from a qualitative perspective remain unclear. Particularly, relatively vague concepts such as peace in the long term may need effective use of accumulated data so that the result can be visualized with numbers. However, it would be interesting to know what the respondents told the evaluators about their perceptions of peace after projects, or even their thoughts on the evaluation results, such as “Why the levels of trust between communities did not improve?”.

Evaluation questions for the criteria “Sustainability”

- *To what extent are the project’s achievements likely to be sustained after the project closeout?*
- *What enables or impedes the sustainability of results?*
- *Were there opportunities to link media programming with real-world engagement? If so, did the partnership between CSO partners, local media networks, and individual station managers capitalize upon these opportunities?*

Here, Sustainability is assessed based on KIIs and FGDs. In short, the evaluators concluded that soft-skill and capacity-building activities can be key to sustaining the effect of this project. On the contrary, the potential hindrance is insufficiency of resources, especially financially. There were a few comments by members of FDGs that indicated how helpful the project activities were. Additionally, as an answer to the third evaluation question, the evaluators found that cooperating with existing groups for the discussion and involving radio stations could help media programming to be connected with real-world engagement.

- How do they make sure to decolonize the evaluation process?

In general, this final evaluation report included both positive and negative opinions related to the project, and they reached out to various stakeholders through the evaluation process. Moreover, in the section of Lessons Learned, the report quoted the message from a CSO leader who said “You cannot talk to people about peace while they are hungry or talk to youth and young boys and girls about peace while you don’t open up schools to them. To attain successful peacebuilding, you need to include livelihood, education, and health, and interlink them” (p.26). This reflects the community’s situation very well and it is a great lesson to improve the project in the future. Although this urged me the question why this perspective was overseen before the implementation of the project, the evaluation contributed to the learning process of Search and its donor, so that project planning can reflect the real situations in the community.

However, the indicators and evaluation questions do not seem to have been discussed with participants of the project and its activities. As mentioned, there were several indicators to ask if the participants could list the radio program or the name of one concrete peacebuilding action. Thus, it would be important to have a common idea of why those questions are needed. Otherwise, this project could result in a “learning” conflict solution along with the guidelines provided by someone from outside of the community, and the evaluation may fall into the position of a “test” to learn

outsiders' guidelines. The ToC for this project is, also mentioned "If groups from similar sectors of conflicting societies work together on issues of mutual interest, then they will learn to cooperate, and cross-cutting networks will be created across the divide. ...". What should be highlighted here is that societies, communities, and their dynamics at the project sites already existed even before the project started. Thus, "how to cooperate with each other" is to be established based on discussions rather than "learning" from the project implemented by the international organizations. I thought it worth mentioning it in relation to "decolonization", however, it is also important to remember that this criticism does not diminish this project's achievement such as having offered and created spaces for people to discuss "peace".

4-2. Comparison and Analysis of Three Cases

Based on the explanations above, I have compared what are the differences and similarities between them and how each variable might affect each other. To compare three different cases, descriptions are made to be as similar as possible. The simple table for the comparison is provided below.

<Table 3: Simplified Table of the project information>

Name of the Project	Involved Actors	Donor	Evaluator	Duration of Evaluation	Participants of Evaluation
Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC) Project	UNDP, local Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Community Based Organization (CBOs), Faith Based Organization (FBOs), INGOs and University of Juba, and other peace actors (There were cooperation with the other UNDP programmes, UNESCO, UNMISS, IOM)	Sweden, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Japan, United Nations Peacebuilding Funds (PBF)	An external team of two Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) consultants, and Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) for quality assurance	40 working days	UNDP Project staffs, Local implementation partners, IOM, SGBV victims, participants of the projects (Peace committees, youth groups, women groups, IDPs, Returnees, and Psychosocial and economic empowerment groups and community members at interdependency projects)
RECONCILIATION FOR PEACE (RFPSS)	Catholic Relief Services (CRS), South Sudan Council of Churches' (SSCC's), Inter-Church Committee (ICC)	USAID	A team of three experts on South Sudan from Management Systems International (MSI) (MSI is a consulting firm located in the USA)	60 days in total	CRS, SSCC and ICC representatives, Youth Leaders&Participants/Female Participants/ Community Elders/ Community Peace Facilitators, Project managers and staff
I Love my Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan.	Search for Common Ground, Radio stations, Local CSOs	Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPS) of the Canadian Government	Forcier Consulting Forcier Consulting (Two researchers and 12 local enumerators for quantitative research. There were no details about a team in charge of qualitative research)	At least 13 days	Residents in the target location, people who have listened to the radio programme offered by the project, local authority representatives, community leaders, civil society representatives, and implementing staffs

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, case studies were analyzed based on the operationalization process explained in the table below. The categories below correspond to the

questions asked in each case explanation from 4-1-1 to 4-1-3. In this section, I have compared those three from different perspectives according to the table suggested in Chapter 3, p. 27.

4-2-1. How evaluation processes were different?

First of all, evaluations are conducted by international consulting firms or external experts. The report said evaluations for Peace and Community Cohesion (Hereafter PaCC) were held by a team of external experts, however, the details of that team were not revealed. The evaluation for Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (Hereafter RfPSS) was undertaken by a team of three experts and the report itself was prepared by a consulting firm, Management Systems International (MSI). Lastly, I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan (Hereafter PLUPCS) was evaluated by Focier Consulting; however, the structure of the evaluation team and size were not clear. Comparing those three cases, I have found the relationship between the implementing organization, the donor, and the evaluation team differs. PaCC was evaluated by experts who were most likely UNDP hired (at least there was no consulting firm or organization mentioned). In this project, UNDP is the one who implemented the project. On the other hand, RfPSS was funded by USAID, but conducted by South Sudanese faith-based organizations and a consulting firm was in charge of the evaluation. PLUPC was implemented by Search, however, a consulting firm was responsible for creating the evaluation report although it was not clear who was involved in the evaluation team. Compared to PaCC and PLUPC, the report of RfPSS criticized a project in a pretty direct manner and cited various comments from respondents even if it was negative comments on the project. This could have been done because the organization that implemented the project was not a donor or implementing organization. In other words, the evaluation team might have more objectivity than others.

In the process of evaluation, PaCC and PLUPC utilized the OECD criteria according to the guidelines to some extent. However, the report for RfPSS has its criteria. Although the reasoning behind the criteria was not explained in the report evaluation questions are normally developed by certain teams according to the USAID Learning Lab website⁷. On the contrary, PLUPC selected four criteria out of six OECD's criteria while PaCC selected five criteria. What PaCC has added was "cross-cutting issues" which include "gender equality" and "human rights". This category is listed in the guideline by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office and this guideline also suggests potential evaluation questions. Thus, it appears that PaCC utilized criteria from the OECD and UNDP. From those facts, it can be said that evaluation criteria for RfPSS are more tailored to the

⁷ <https://usaidlearninglab.org/>

project whereas PLUPC adopted ready-made criteria by OECD even though they prepared the evaluation indicators by themselves. However, this does not mean USAID does not have any guidelines or standardized evaluation process. For instance, one of USAID’s guidelines is on how to create good evaluation questions and it provides tips such as how to form (phrase) evaluation questions, etc.

<Table 4: Comparison of the Evaluation Criteria>

Name of Project	Evaluation Criteria
PaCC	Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Cross-cutting Issues (Human Rights and Gender Equality)
RfPSS	Participation, Relevance, Strengths and Weaknesses, Assumptions, Emphasis, Effectiveness
PLUPC	Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability

Interestingly, one of their guidelines argued that “Each word in the evaluation question should be clearly defined. Be especially careful about important (but ambiguous) terms, such as ‘effective,’ ‘sustainable,’ ‘efficient,’ ‘relevant,’ ‘objective,’ and ‘success’”(Bureau for Policy, 2015), because the interpretation of the word could largely differ depending on each person. Thus, questions should be altered from “To what extent is this project relevant?” to, for example, “Have the appropriate stakeholders received the project training and technical support?”. On the other hand, PaCC had a survey question directly inquiring such as if the project was relevant to the community needs. Those criteria also indicate what each organization emphasizes.

In terms of the methodology, they were not very different. All three evaluations utilized a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative research.

<Table 5: Comparison of the Methodology>

Name	Methodology
PaCC	A mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative approaches. There were five sources of data: Desk Review, KIIs, FGDs, Observation Checklist, and Individual Survey.
RfPSS	A mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Three methods for analysis: context analysis, organizational assessment, and case study. One to three approaches are applied to each evaluation criterion. There were three sources of data: literature review, KIIs, and facilitated focus group discussions (FFGDs).

PLUPC	<p>The mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative approaches.</p> <p>There were four sources of data: a desk review of project documentation and relevant literature, a household survey, FGDs, and KIIs.</p>
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The data was collected through mostly, desk review, FGDs, and KIIs. Nevertheless, PaCC also applied an observation checklist which enabled them to observe people's natural behavior in various settings. RfPSS explained that they used three methodologies for analysis: context analysis, organizational assessment, and case study. This analysis gave a deep insight into stakeholders' opinions.

4-2-2. What is considered an achievement?

To investigate what is considered an achievement, this section had a close look at ToC as mentioned in the Methodology chapter (see Appendix 1). It is because the ToC should be the goal to aim at by conducting projects and thus, it would be suitable for comparing what each project considers as "success of peacebuilding". After that, the description of "success story" and "good practices" were investigated to figure out the examples of success in their projects.

When it comes to the outcomes, PaCC focuses on the stability of the country at national and local levels whereas RfPSS mentioned its outcome was to create an environment for a peace process can take root. PLUPC on the other hand, focuses more on improving people's relationships so that conflict can be solved peacefully. When it comes to the output, the differences are more recognizable. As PaCC pointed out, outcomes can be achieved by strengthening traditional conflict mechanisms, the improvement of relationships between communities, and establishment of institutional peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms. RfPSS emphasizes the participation of diverse groups of people, the prevalence of the good practices of transitional justice, and the engagement of civil societies in the reconciliation process. Lastly, PLUPC's ToC shows their outcome can be achieved because people at the project site will learn to cooperate and networks among them will be created. The differences here are that the approach by PaCC envisions societal structure and conflict resolution through the intervention while RfPSS aims at involving as many stakeholders as possible and sharing common values among people but not necessarily directly solving and stabilizing the situation by this project. The unique part of PLUPC is that the project does not seem to reflect people's values but focuses on how the project can influence individuals.

Secondly, I have shed light on sentences using “success story” and “good practice”. There was only a report by PaCC the word “success story” with certain examples while RfPSS explained that “Clear documentation of case studies and success stories are provided in the annual reports presented by the implementing partner”. PLUPC did not use the word “success story” and none of them used “good practice” with examples in their reports. Although RfPSS used “good practice” in ToC, it did not provide any examples. Moreover, all of the reports used “success” quite frequently, however, most of them used it as in, to what extent did they achieved the project goals. And therefore, this does not necessarily indicate a perception of peace. The success story provided by PaCC was a story from one participant in the psychosocial support group. It mentioned how providing training helped the community to understand the impacts of SGBV and how to give care to victims. Based on this example, the “success” here was not long-term impacts on the community or collective change in the community, but more about immediate change happening to the individual. As for the RfPSS, the good practices in the implementation of the organization’s annual reports focused on personal experiences or interviewees’ lives.

Lastly, PLUPC has suggested their perception of peace through their selection of the evaluation criteria and survey questions. PLUPC is the only organization that selected both “Effectiveness” and “Impact” for their evaluation criteria. As “Impact” means to measure the longer-term results of the project, it implied what was considered an ideal situation in the long-term (or “Peace”) for Search. To measure the impact, they inquired the same questions to people in the community with the survey before the project and the final evaluation survey. Those asked about their perception of whether the country/community is at peace, their recent conflicts, the causes of the conflicts, and the way to deal with the conflict situation. Indeed, it is hard to identify if those changes happened due to the projects offered by Search, or the societal situations at the time evaluators conducted the survey. However, those questions highlight what Search expects as long-term goals of activities. As analyzed above, PLUPC focuses on the impact of the project on individuals and participants’ learnings. Taking it into consideration, their selection of a long-term goal such as “the way project participants deal with the conflict” seems relevant to the activities they offered and thus coherent with their value.

4-2-3. What indicates their consideration of the “decolonization”?

Unfortunately, none of the three reports mention decolonization. However, when I compare those three reports from the perspective of local turn, participation approach, and everyday peace, there are several differences. First of all, the participation approach does not necessarily

reflect the idea of “decolonization”, if international organizations do not involve beneficiaries of the projects in the decision-making process. Therefore, based on the discussion related to decolonizing evaluation, what I have considered here is whether those organizations attempt not to impose the worldview of “outsiders” on the project beneficiaries through the evaluation. In Chapter 2, we have seen the evaluation in conflict-affected settings. Unlike the example of EPI by Firchow, there were no evaluation-created indicators with project beneficiaries among the three cases this research focused on. The importance of the participatory approach was mentioned in none of them either. Although RfPSS had a criterion of “participation”, it attempted to measure the inclusiveness in the project implementation process but not in the evaluation process.

Taking this situation into consideration, three findings can be pointed out in regard to “decolonization”, as in actively making people’s voices heard through the evaluation process. Firstly, there were differences in the inclusiveness of the opinions in the reports. It was identified that what made the differences was the representation of the findings in the report rather than the data collection methodology they used. PLUPC provided several answers on the same topic from people in different positions, and RfPSS included plenty of both positive and negative comments from various stakeholders. PaCC rarely shares negative aspects of the project. It is inevitable to question whether respondents’ insights are equally reflected in the report, especially if it shares solely positive results. This lack of transparency could result in utilizing evaluation just to highlight the “great achievement” of the implementing organizations but not reflecting what people at the project sites received.

Secondly, the power dynamics hinted at in the reports are interesting aspects to consider as they imply the evaluator's recognition of their position. As mentioned earlier analysis, perception of the cost-efficiency, and the standardized evaluation criteria made PaCC’s report questionable in terms of adopting the decolonization concept to their evaluation. The indicators and ToC in the PLUPC report suggest a structure between Search and the local population in which the project implementor teaches something to the local population and it does not necessarily build peace according to the value for the beneficiaries of the projects. The fact that evaluators of RfPSS call themselves “an outsider” might be related to the reason their report included comments and opinions from respondents the most.

Lastly, the usage of ToC can be improved in the context of decolonization. The design, especially the output and outcome/impact should reflect the values of the people involved in the projects. Moreover, despite the merit of using ToC, none of the three projects mentioned that those ToC were agreed on among all the stakeholders before the project implementation. In other words, the ToCs could have integrated ideas of “peace” among multiple stakeholders if they were

discussed together. The more stakeholders, the more challenging it is to agree on something; however, those peacebuilding projects cannot be truly participatory without confirming where everyone is aiming.

4-2-4. 2Explanatory variables

Lastly, I have analyzed where the differences among the three cases came from based on the process explained in the methodology chapter. If the previous sections in this chapter were for identifying “how” all those cases were different, this section is to attempt to identify “why” they are different. However, three cases are not enough to establish any hypothesis of causal relationships and thus, this only suggests an implication for the potential further research.

There was a hypothesis of what may have made differences between the involved actors, the donor, and the evaluator. As an alternative factor, the duration of the evaluation was listed as well.

The Involved Actors

To make the cases comparable, all cases had different types of actors involved, especially implementing organizations. PaCC had diverse partner organizations and cooperated with them for various activities, yet the main implementing organization remained UNDP. RfPSS had fewer partner organizations, however, the uniqueness of this project is that the main implementing organization was SSCC which is a faith organization established in South Sudan with a region-level umbrella organization, ICC. The project was operated by those organizations under the support of an international NGO, CRS. Although the partnership deficits among those organizations have been pointed out, the project evaluation involved voices from people working at the grassroots level. In PLUPC, Search was the implementing organization that worked closely with the groups of people in the community. They managed to include people’s opinions on the projects in the evaluation report, however, there were not many partnership organizations cooperating with the projects at the local level. Overall, this finding may indicate that the more local organizations are involved in implementing projects, the easier it is to access opinions from people on the project site during the evaluation as they are automatically heavily involved as respondents.

The Donors

They can influence the range of local stakeholders that the project can involve, the selection of evaluation criteria, and the duration of the project, to name a few. These dynamics are too often ignored in international interventions. This research also demonstrated that evaluation could be

utilized as a tool to highlight only the positive side of the project. It could benefit all because the implementing organizations need funds to reach out to more beneficiaries or to last projects longer, while donors need evidence that their decisions to support this project were right. On the other hand, donors indeed have the right to be provided with reasonable explanations. Thus, evaluation should attempt to cover two purposes the evaluation; accountability and internal learning.

The Evaluators

One way to see the difference between the evaluators can be their objectivity. Indeed, all of the cases hired the external team for the evaluation which theoretically holds objectivity compared to the internal evaluation. However, if the team was hired by the donor and evaluated projects implemented by third parties, it would be easier to criticize their faults. On the other hand, if the evaluators are hired by the organization that implemented the project, that dynamics might hinder them from addressing criticism.

The Duration of the Evaluation

The duration can impact the evaluation because it is clear that the evaluation team could do research according to the time they have. The longer they have time, the more people they can reach out to. PLUPC had at least 13 days, RfPSS had 60 days in total, and PaCC had 40 working days for the evaluation. (In the report of PLUPC, it said “Fieldwork took place in both locations simultaneously from January 30th – February 11th” rather than writing the duration. However, it is highly likely the shortest duration among those three cases.) Therefore, PLUPC had the least number of people for the interviews or survey, and it had four evaluation criteria whereas the other two had five to six criteria. On the other hand, the methodology was not significantly different from the others. What I have found, however, was that it is not only about the duration of the evaluation but more about the budget they have for the evaluation. One good example was described in the report for RfPSS. When the evaluation team noticed that there would not be sufficient time for the research, the consulting company in charge of the evaluation team discussed with USAID to extend the duration of the evaluation and add three more field visits. It would have been impossible if there were not enough budget to keep paying those three experts.

Summary

Overall, the purpose of the evaluation (learning, accountability), involvement of the implementing organization, and the positioning of evaluators may differentiate evaluation processes. Moreover, with many of those factors explained above, the donors have a strong

influence substantially in various ways. The purpose of the evaluation can change the result representation in the evaluation report; however, it is worth noting that evaluation reports need to reflect both sides of the evaluation. Indeed, the accountability aspects should be included for the donor, however, the report may not properly convey the real results if the evaluators emphasize the accountability aspect too much over the learning aspect. On the contrary, it is not clear if the organizations that implemented or designed projects have learned based on the previous project's reports. If internal learning is focused, learnings should be shared across the projects and ideally, across the international organizations who conduct projects in a similar region or with similar projects' goals. In terms of the "decolonization of the evaluation", evaluation could pick up voices from people better when the local actors are involved well enough. This does not only mean participatory approaches for the evaluation but also involving as many actors as possible in the project from the beginning. By doing so, the evaluation will automatically involve those stakeholders as participants of the evaluation. This helps evaluators to get insights from a wide range of populations in the projects. Lastly, the representation of the result could be influenced by the evaluators as well. Especially, their recognition of their positionality as an evaluator is important.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis thus far, I will conclude this research by summarizing two findings regarding the evaluation of “peace” and its decolonization. First of all, the evaluation reports do not necessarily reflect the ideas of “peace” either from project implementors’ or communities’ perspectives. The evaluation criteria for “impact” can be complemented by “effectiveness” in the evaluation reports since those reports stress how peacebuilding projects met the intended short-term influence of the project (output/outcome), not the long-term influence of the project (impact). One possible reason is the unpredictability of conflict-affected settings; however, it would be essential to consider what needs to be changed on the impact level in peacebuilding projects. For example, the various images of success in peacebuilding create gaps in “achievement” among those three cases. While some focused on stability and establishing conflict resolution mechanisms based on the intervention, others emphasized participation and offering spaces for peacebuilding activities, and the other considered behavioral change on individuals by intervention to be an achievement. What I found intriguing is that some of them centered the intervention as a key driver of peacebuilding meanwhile the others focused on promoting participation in the opportunity to discuss peace. Looking at those approaches through the lens of everyday peace and local turn, it would be ideal to offer a place for people to let their voice be heard not necessarily actively “establishing” something by intervention. Involving more actors from the different levels of project operation may require more time, funds, and engagement, however, considering that the participatory approach is gaining more attention in the field of development, the evaluation process should be integrated with that concept. There were no examples of participatory approaches taking place in establishing evaluation criteria and discussion of “success”. Nevertheless, one of the advantages of using a ToC is the possibility of sharing a common vision of the project among all the stakeholders. Therefore, it should be utilized more optimally.

Secondly, this analysis indicated the lack of attention to the decolonization of the evaluation, and it needs to be considered more. Especially, the indicators and the evaluation criteria are way too standardized despite the diversity, context sensitivity, and conflict sensitivity that should be taken into account. However, the participatory approach in the evaluation is not enough for communities to share their idea of peace. The involvement of local actors from the project design and implementation can encompass their insights. As a result, their involvement can help the evaluation to be more decolonized. Moreover, several factors could make differences in the evaluations such as the purpose of the evaluation (learning, accountability), involved implementing organizations, the

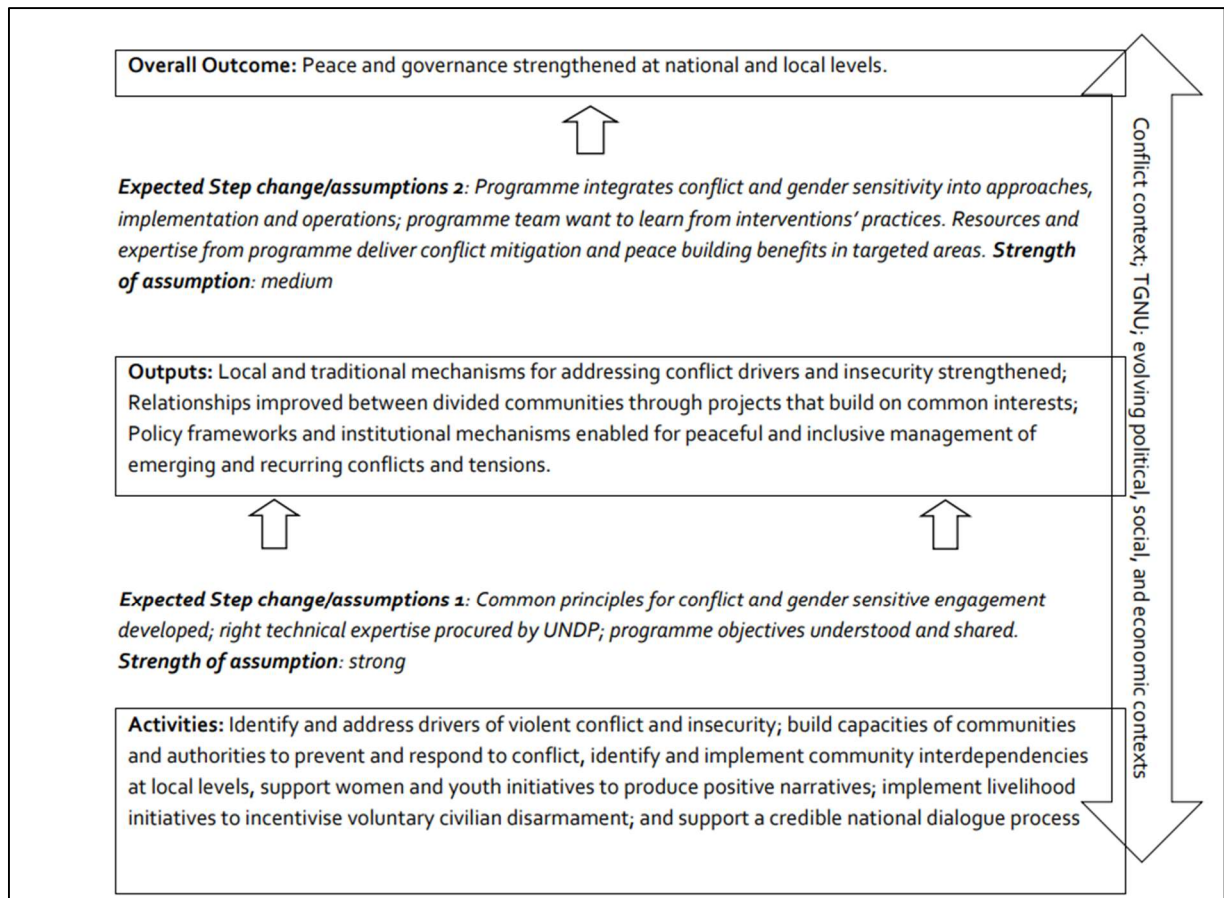
positioning of evaluators, and donors. This research suggested that a fundamental structure of the evaluation should be reconsidered too, to contribute to measuring “peace” in communities’ definition.

The evaluation could be the measure of “good” or “bad”. The evaluation process will be a tool to impose “peace” from outsiders’ perspective unless the ideas of “peace” are discussed among all stakeholders involved in the project.

APPENDIX

1. Theories of Change

Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC)



(Cited from: John Kimote & Philip Deng, 2020)

The Reconciliation for Peace in South Sudan (RfPSS) project

If men, women and youth throughout the country **participate** in an inclusive peace and reconciliation process with broad grassroots engagement, if there is **systematic promotion of best practices** for transitional justice, and if civil society needs and **voices are considered** in peace negotiation and implementation processes, then **a just and sustainable peace and reconciliation process** can take root.

(Cited from: Management Systems International (MSI), 2019)

“I Love My Country: Promoting Localized Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence in South Sudan”

“If groups from similar sectors of conflicting societies work together on issues of mutual interest, then they will learn to cooperate, and cross-cutting networks will be created across the divide. This, in turn, will lead to increased trust and positive attitudes and relations, and participants will ultimately prefer and be able to resolve conflicts peacefully.”

(Cite from: Search for Common Ground, 2019)

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