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## Community Security Assessment Aweil Centre, South Sudan (May 2020)

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### Aweil Centre

#### 1. Introduction:

This is a summary of key findings from a Community Security Assessment (CSA) carried out by Saferworld and Community Initiative for Partnership and Development (CIPAD) in May 2020 in Aweil Centre. It describes key security and safety concerns, what has changed or improved and the new issues that have emerged since 2018 to date, plus recommendations on what should be done to address those issues to ensure peace prevails.

This report forms an updated version of a 2018 Community Security Assessment conducted by Saferworld and CIPAD. The latest findings indicate that some of the key community security threats identified in 2018 have changed and others remained unchanged from 2018.

The assessment involved conducting Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and facilitating Focus Group Discussions (FGD) for at least five to six individuals in line with COVID-19 restrictions on social distancing. This assessment targeted authorities, youth, women, civil society organisations (CSOs), traders, teachers, and people with disabilities, INGOs and UN agencies operating in Aweil Central County. Respondents were asked about their perception of what has changed over the past two years and identified new safety issues affecting youth, women and the community in general.

#### 2. Main threats to community safety in Aweil

##### 2.1. Main threats to community safety in Aweil that remain unchanged since 2018:

- Theft and robberies in markets and residential areas in Aweil town remain a major community security and safety issue.
- Land grabbing by elites residents in Aweil Centre persists which posed threat to residents in the town.
- Conflicts between cattle keepers and farmers in connection with the destruction of farm crops by cattle in the villages in Aweil. For example, conflict between Ambororo nomads and farmers in Aweil as well as persistent conflict between Luo farmers and pastoralists often result in violence, insecurity, displacement and other destabilising factors.
- Tensions and conflict between statutory courts and traditional courts when cases that are considered customary in nature are addressed by statutory courts, leaving traditional courts with no work to do.
- Domestic and gender-based violence. Domestic violence has been identified as one of the major safety and security concerns for women and girls in Aweil.
- Increase in the number and activities of youth gangs and children in the streets of Aweil most of whom are involved in petty theft in the market and residential areas. This has also led to widespread child abuse including child labour
- Early marriages of young girls before completing primary education resulting in increased number of school dropouts among girls.
- High rate of youth unemployment.
- The national economic crisis continues to threaten peace and safety in Aweil. High inflation in the country has made many goods and services unaffordable, posing a threat to livelihoods of the people of Aweil.
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- Resource based conflicts. These conflict stem from insufficient resources and heightened contestations over access to them, for instance, water points which cause tensions among communities over the use of the few resources available.
- Uncovered latrines and shallow wells which are traps for children to fall into.
- Illicit arms circulation among the civilian population.

## 2.2. Issues that have changed or improved since 2018

- Cases of forced marriages have reduced in Aweil Centre.
- Reported rape cases in Aweil Centre have reduced.
- Disputes over local borders ~~e~~-between Payams and between counties, which emerged after the creation of 32 states, have now ceased with the reversal of the country back to ten states in addition to many peace dialogues that were conducted to resolve the matter in Aweil.
- Issues related to the political appointment of chiefs, which was causing conflict between government-appointed chiefs and community chiefs, have been minimized.
- Some crimes which are usually associated with the operation of bars and night clubs have reduced due to the implementation of COVID 19 preventive measures that ordered the closure of bars, night clubs and other entertainment facilities .
- Road traffic accidents in town have reduced
- Makuac-awiit cemetery was relocated to high lands Apada after concerns were raised by the neighbouring communities. Saferworld and CIPAD supported a dialogue between community and local authorities to address the matter of the cemetery.

## 2.3. New issues that have emerged since 2018

- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected livelihoods of people in Aweil. Some of the businesses such as leisure facilities and salons were closed, and this resulted in the loss of incomes for women and youth. In Aweil, there have been seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 with no confirmed deaths.
- The economic crisis has contributed to increase number of youth gangs and the emergence of illicit markets introduced by criminals for exchanging stolen property.
- Sexual exploitation of young girls and poor women due to economic hardships owing to loss of their small and informal businesses such as tea selling.
- Increased daylight robberies by gangs, for example, snatching of women's bags.
- High consumption of locally-brewed alcohol posing serious health risks to consumers.
- Smuggling of goods at the borders between Sudan and South Sudan due to the border closures as part of the COVID-19 response and rising tensions between Dinka Malual and Misseria impacted the flow of goods and services from Sudan leading to the increase of prices in the market as well as loss of revenue collection.
- Increased cases of divorce resulting from economic hardships which has left many women and children vulnerable.
- Increased cases of attempted suicide in the communities
- Inadequate police personnel in residential areas

## 3. Specific issues affecting youth

### 3.1. Specific issues affecting youth that have remained the same since 2018

- High rate of youth unemployment.
- Gang activities, often involving crimes such theft and robberies, remained unchanged since 2018. In addition, many pupils have dropped out of school to join gangsters and gamblers.
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- Increase of divorce in Aweil has caused unprecedented destitution among young women. This has also forced some young women into prostitution.
- Sexual exploitation.

### 3.2. Youth specific issues that have changed or improved since 2018

- Reduced cases of forced/early marriages.
- Increased involvement of youth in community development initiatives

### 3.3. New issues that have emerged since 2018

- Illicit markets were created by youth gangs/gamblers for the exchange of stolen property.
- Sexual exploitation is increasing among young women and girls due to dire economic conditions.
- Closure of schools because of covid-19.
- Youth gangs recruiting school children into criminal groups and involving these children in criminal activities such as theft.

- High consumption of locally brewed alcohol by young people fuelling in insecurity in town.
- Burning of houses by youth gangs during the night. Police are investigating the motive behind this act.

#### **4. Specific issues affecting women**

##### **4.1. Specific issues affecting women and girls that have remained the same since 2018**

- Denial of women's rights, for example, right to own property, right to inherit property and others
- Domestic violence often involving wife beating by men.
- Rampant divorce of young women which has pushed them into prostitution.
- Polygamy – men marry multiple wives, but due to economic hardship, men are unable to provide for and maintain these many wives. This often results in domestic violence and/or divorce.
- Thefts and robbery in the markets and residential areas in Aweil centre.
- The economic crisis coupled with COVID-19 restrictive measures have added a huge burden on women, the majority of whom are breadwinners in the area. Due to restrictions on social distancing, some businesses like bars, salons and hairdressers were closed in an attempt to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This has strongly affected women economically.
- High rate of unemployment among women as they lack the necessary qualifications for viable employment opportunities
- Fighting over water points has continued or even increased. Due to insufficient of water points in Aweil, many women and girls line up to get water and conflicts can erupt in the queue.

##### **4.2. Issues affecting women that have changed or improved since 2018**

- Reduced cases of forced marriages.
- Increased involvement of women in community development affairs.
- There is significant reduction of reported rape cases in Aweil compared to 2018
- Girl enrolment in schools has reduced.

##### **4.3. New issues affecting women that emerged since 2018**

- COVID-19 and its economic impacts on women. For example, businesses like hairdressers run by women were closed.
- Increased cases of divorce of women. Due to widespread polygamy with little resources to sustain many wives, some women have sought divorce.
- Increase of sexual exploitation of women as result of dire economic conditions.
- Attempted suicides are regularly occurring due to difficult living conditions and forced marriages. The majority of those who have attempted suicide are women who find themselves in marriages which are not of their choice.

#### **5. Potential solutions to the identified community safety concerns in Aweil centre**

- Awareness-raising campaigns on COVID-19 in communities.
- Continued awareness-raising campaigns on peace and security with a focus on the rights of women and girls.
- Engagement and advocacy with two governments (Sudan and South Sudan) to address the problem of border and conflict between Dinka Malual and Missieria.
- Supporting youth on livelihood activities to uplift them from poverty.
- Advocating for child-focused organisations to provide support to young girls.
- The state government to address illegal markets as well as disputes over local borders in Aweil Centre.
- Conducting peace dialogues between cattle keepers and farmers.