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Civil Society & Diaspora Initiatives

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#DEFYHATENOW | CHAPTER 8

CIVIL SOCIETY & DIASPORA INITIATIVES

CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

Civil society plays a critical role in advancing the protection and promotion of human rights – even where this may not be a central part of their mandate. Their activities can be central in responding to 'hate speech' as they can provide the space for formal and informal interactions between people of similar or diverse backgrounds, and platforms from which individuals can exercise freedom expression and tackle inequality and discrimination.

At the local, national, regional and international levels, civil society initiatives are among the most innovative and effective for monitoring and responding to incidents of intolerance and violence, as well as for countering "hate speech."

Civil society initiatives are often designed and implemented by the individuals and communities most affected by discrimination and violence, and provide unique possibilities for communicating positive messages to and educating the public, as well as monitoring the nature and impact of discrimination. Ensuring a safe and enabling environment for civil society to operate is therefore also crucial.

Role of meaningful inter-group dialogue

A lack of meaningful inter-group communication, and the isolation and insularity of which this is a symptom, is often identified as a significant contributing factor to inter-group tensions, where 'hate speech' is more prevalent, and incitement to violence, hostility or discrimination more likely.

Sustained and effective dialogue between distinct groups, in particular between communities of different religions or beliefs, can serve an effective preventative measure, by achieving the alleviation of tensions or suspicion between groups.

This may be particularly effective in contexts where there is a history of inter-group tensions escalating into incitement of, or actual, incidents of violence and discrimination. However, in order to be effective, dialogue must provide the spaces for a genuine, rather than symbolic, exchange of views, and enable the discussion of differences and disagreements. Dialogue must also be inclusive, allowing for community representation beyond "traditional" leaders.

Furthermore, informal exchanges between communities, detached from intergroup dialogue, for example in the context of sport or cultural exchanges, or designed to address practical issues of common concern, can also prove to be important trust- and relationship-building exercises. The impact of inter-group dialogue and communication initiatives can be enhanced where they receive public support from government.

Outside of the context of formal or informal "dialogues", representative of different communities, in particular religious leaders and other community leaders, should be empowered to speak out in response to intolerance and discrimination. This is particularly important where proponents of intolerance and discrimination portray themselves as representative of, or acting on behalf of, specific communities or interest groups. Religious and community leaders are well placed not only to refute these claims of representation, but also to substantively engage with and challenge an individual's position, and thus offer a persuasive counter-narrative.

Hate Speech Explained, A Toolkit
(edited extract) Article 19, 2015 CC-BY-SA
www.article19.org @article19org facebook.com/article19org

THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF SOUTH SUDAN
The role of transnational networks and mobile citizens in South Sudan's global community: a pilot study focused on Melbourne and Juba

International migrations since the 1960s have created a global South Sudanese community that has been fundamental to the challenging process of forming a South Sudanese state. These networks have also undermined political and civic responsibility within South Sudan. Powerful individuals, funding and political decisions are able to move across this international space, bypassing formal government structures and accountability.

> " The research has demonstrated that the hyper-politicized ethnic identification created by the current civil war creates an environment where any action can be interpreted in multiple ways. "

Where networks run primarily along ethnic and community lines, working through them can be perceived as actively undermining more national forms of identity. Elites who are most implicated in the conflict and are most able to navigate the transnational space—often through dual citizenships and family ties—bring the effects of this wider transnational community into disrepute.

Information and trust

"Politics is nothing more than words just being said to people."

These networks of migration, finance and support are dependent on information exchange and cross-verification. There are very few verifiable and commonly-trusted sources of information for South Sudanese people worldwide. Findings from the University of Juba survey showed that most believed only Al Jazeera and the BBC were trustworthy enough not to need cross-verification.

Many apparently factual reports from international or national news agencies are challenged by the South Sudanese government or rebel media spokespeople on a regular basis.

"To be honest you can't really get any facts from anywhere at the moment."
"We don't know exactly what is happening. Or exactly why it is happening."

This communication is often via direct calls in crises but on a regular basis by Facebook and Facebook Messenger, Viber, Skype and WhatsApp. News reports and blog posts circulate by these mediums from Sudan Tribune, Radio Tamazuj,31 BBC Africa and SBS Radio based in Melbourne, as well as other popular but ethnically-partisan blog sites such as Nyamilepedia and Paanluelwel. This mass of information—much of which is partial or misinformation—is carefully sifted and managed within Juba. This involves significant cross-referencing and discussion.

"There is a way of looking for facts … When there are facts [my cousin in Juba] will direct me and ring to me and talk to me really about what is happening. Then also the people of that village of my husband, there is a man there, sometimes I ring him [to ask:] 'What is happening?' He would tell me exactly what is happening to them. So when I ring to them to find for some news I look for the facts."

Those with extensive personal and social networks, and who have contacts within political and security elites and/or across combat lines, are able to more confidently determine good data. As a result, these actors are often more confident in manipulating onward messages and making decisions on this basis.

In Juba, cross-verification and the spread of immediate word-of-mouth news—particularly around troop movements or other armed incidents—is a rapid and practiced process […] This allows those in Juba to vet information passed through these networks.

Those outside of Juba, on the other hand, can feel overwhelmed by access to so many sources of information. One university student in Juba noted that diaspora residents have greater access to opposition news and discussions but are far removed from these local processes of verification and cross-referencing.

"The diaspora have a lot of news but what they have is just rumours. … And because here the news that we have can be justified in South Sudan. We know the source. But most of the news that they [have] doesn't have a source."

In this information market, the diaspora plays a key role in framing news and events. The Juba research team noted a common understanding that South Sudan residents are the source of raw information that is then framed and politically packaged by those living outside the country, and re-disseminated through social and other media. This elaborated commentary is prevalent on Facebook and Juba residents commented on the manipulation of photographs and narratives there.

"They are using [fake] images … like bringing us 'something happened in South Sudan' [but from] earlier in 2013 … what do you think if someone is just giving you [fake] facts? Something which did not happen in your country? Then I consider it a joke."

> " social media 'amplifies the fault lines that were already there.' "

Free speech, too much speech and hate speech

This international framing and repackaging of news and information from South Sudan is enabled and possibly exacerbated through the comparative freedom of speech and media activity in countries like Australia. The most frequent example of this, cited by residents in both Melbourne and Juba, is of SBS Radio, a national public radio with broadcasts in Dinka.

SBS is accessible online in Juba, mostly through clips and transcribed statements circulated through Facebook and WhatsApp […] For many in Juba, social media - particularly for long-term or permanent diaspora residents who are disconnected with the daily realities and immediate personal risks of the conflicts they are commenting on - encourages flippant partisan comment. A South Sudanese-Australian participant commented:

"[If] my tribe had a fight with another tribe and then maybe that tribe were defeated, automatically I shared it to my friend, it's like a football game."

Juba residents criticized this form of reaction from diaspora residents:

"Most of them … they just heard the information through phone or where, and just post it. And this is where they incite a lot of problems. And even they don't care what will happen because they are not in South Sudan. They don't know what is happening on the ground. Most of them, they keep on talking, talking, talking, and they don't know what is happening. So they are contributing a lot to hatred and violence."

This is not an uncritical discourse of tribalism and incitement. Many people commented that 'what is happening in our country is not tribal violence but it is political violence with tribal cultures.'

> "what is happening in our country is not tribal violence but it is political violence with tribal cultures."

The continuing violent events in South Sudan, however, are deeply traumatic and provoke highly emotional responses, which political actors on all sides deploy in pursuit of partisan ends [...] This is not confined to social media, but as a Juba-based South Sudanese political analyst noted, social media 'amplifies the fault lines that were already there.'

The role of transnational networks and mobile citizens in South Sudan's global community: a pilot study focused on Melbourne and Juba
Rift Valley Institute, March 2018
http://riftvalley.net/publications

MARY APOLLO ON THE ROLE OF DIASPORA BASED JOURNALISTS PROMOTING PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN: "I #DEFYHATENOW"

July 12th 2017

We had a chat with US-based South Sudanese journalist Mary Apollo, an Atlas Corps fellow talking about writing and the impact of the Diaspora community in building a peaceful South Sudan.

How do you describe yourself?

I am an activist and I have a relationship with words. In short, I love telling stories through the written word (fiction and non-fiction). I have six years experience working with NGOs.

When did you start your writing career and what inspired you?

As soon as I could spell, I could write. Growing up I read a lot – I still do – and this led me to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Khartoum where I studied Psychology and Mass Communication.

After I graduated in 2010, I worked so hard to get some of my writing published in a newspaper. I got a chance for training in one of the local newspapers in Khartoum, Sudan in the news department.

I wrote about the women who have been facing violence in my society, issues of identity and citizenship, cultural issues and political affairs.

You have lived in more than one country and you have very international experience, what inspires your writing? Whom do you look up to when you write?

I was born, grew up and went to school in Khartoum, Sudan. Apart from my mother tongue, I speak Arabic, English, and French. I studied in Arabic and I have learned the other languages growing up. I have an easy grasp of languages so this makes it easier for me to communicate.

My family inspires my writing as they are part of my first experiences. I draw from my experiences as a little girl growing up in a politically unstable country. I also try to identify my experiences with the people I meet and friends I make in every new place I visit. I read a lot of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work; she inspires me with her creativity and fearlessness.

Tell us more about being a South Sudanese journalist based in the US?

Living in the USA is very different from South Sudan. Life here is fast and different. You are opened up to so many cultures and types of people. Voices here are loud and demand an ear. Career life is also exciting and tough all at once. As an immigrant, you must work twice as hard to prove yourself because you went to school in a different system. You also take every shot you get because the competition is so much more. You also suddenly start dealing with a lot of documentation because you do not want to be on the wrong side of the law.

The contest of writing is new and you begin having new personal experiences. This informs your writing. The audience is also different. In South Sudan, while maintaining the facts there is a need for more details in news or stories. Our speeches are longer. In the USA news and stories are brief but still factual and speeches are shorter.

They cheer you on louder in South Sudan maybe because we are a young country and we are eager for information. In the USA there are many who do what you do, as much as there is support you have no voice cheering you on apart from your inner voice. There is an absence of information about Africa in general here. I have learned this from the questions I get asked. I wish people read more about Africa and particularly South Sudan but I have learned to be gracious and patient in answering all the questions.

What do you think is the impact the Diaspora can make in building a sustainable and peaceful South Sudan?

Some people on social media and not just in the Diaspora use social media to spread "hate speech". This is because everyone has their own channel to share their thoughts on. Be it Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube or Instagram it's easy to share opinions now. Everyone has a role to play on how they use the channel they prefer. It's upon every one of us to use our voices to preach peace and not fuel hate.

I did a live Facebook video to ask people to refrain from spreading hate on social media as it's like petrol on a fire. It's so much easier to spread hate via the internet than through any other channel, you reach a larger audience faster.

I think it's the role of every single South Sudanese on social media to preach peace and ask everyone to #defyhatenow.

How do you think the South Sudanese Diaspora community can use social media to defy hate and preach peace?

They can do different kinds of social campaigns. They can also support causes that support their local community but most importantly they should be very cautious with what they post on social media.

What would you tell anyone reading this…?

It's up to you to hold yourself to a higher regard in terms of maintaining peace. You are not just a drop in the ocean; you are the drop that makes the ocean calm or creates a storm. It's the same case when it comes to social media, are you creating peace or fueling hate speech? #defyhatenow

This interview was conducted & written by Kendi Gikunda. The opinions expressed in this article are the Interviewee's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of #defyhatenow.

http://defyhatenow.net/2017/07/mary-apollo-on-the-role-of-diaspora-based-journalists-in-promoting-peace-in-south-sudan/

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

EXAMPLES OF PEACE & RECONCILIATION PARTNERS

Andariya is an independent digital cultural magazine and community run by women entrepreneurs. The magazine covers grassroots issues as well as worldly issues from and about the two Sudans, with a mix of positive and critical perspectives on gender issues, technology, current affairs and edutainment. Andariya strives to provide content for Sudanese and South Sudanese audiences at home and beyond – in Arabic and in English.
http://www.andariya.com/

Crisis Action works with individuals and organisations from global civil society to protect civilians from armed conflict, with offices globally. **https://crisisaction.org**

junubOS - Junub Open Space is a community oriented initiative, aimed at empowering and supporting Innovation among Youth, with a vision to create a resilient South Sudan through its activities. **https://www.facebook.com/Junubopenspace/**

GoGirls ICT is a Juba, South Sudan based non-profit initiative founded by a group of dedicated young women in the fields of computer science, hacktivism and peacebuilding. Following a philosophy of 'Chain Based Trainings (CBTs)' it focuses on mentoring independent, innovative and confident girls and women who can proudly compete with their male counterparts in the world of ICT. @GoGirlsICT

https://gogirlsict.org/
https://www.facebook.com/GoGirlsICT/

Platform Africa is a youth-led non-profit organisation working to facilitate the building of equitable, informed and empowered communities in the Northern Uganda South Sudan.
https://www.platformafrica.online/ (registered but not yet active) @platformNGO
https://www.facebook.com/platformNGO/

PeaceTech Lab works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data to accelerate and scale peacebuilding efforts. PeaceTech Lab East Africa has developed tools to limit media incitement to violence as well as to monitor and counter hate speech also in collaboration with #defyhatenow, including reports and the PeaceTech Lab Social Media and Conflict in South Sudan, a Lexicon of Hate Speech Terms.
http://www.peacetechlab.org

ROOTS of South Sudan is Committed to Helping the Women of South Sudan Craft a New Nation. The ROOTS PROJECT empowers South Sudanese women and youth through the preservation of traditional Sudanese arts & crafts. The Juba facility supports craft activities, equipment and learning materials and provides members with job skills, literacy, and maths training; and a safe environment for mothers and young children to work and learn: **http://www.rootsofsouthsudan.org/ https://soundcloud.com/user-437815428-336421543/6a-1**

The Sentinel Project is a non-profit organisation from Canada, whose mission is to prevent the crime of genocide worldwide through effective early warning and cooperation with victimised peoples to carry out non-violent prevention initiatives.**https://thesentinelproject.org**

Sawa Shabab (Together Youth) is a dramatic peacebuilding radio series aired by nearly 30 local stations across all states of South Sudan. The radio drama follows the daily lives of young South Sudanese as they face unique challenges while learning how to become peacebuilders in their communities. **http://www.peacetechlab.org/media/sawa-shabab**

Youth Social Advocacy Team (YSAT) is a Refugee Youth led Community based organization working with youth in 33 villages of Rhino Camp, Uganda, engaging South Sudanese youth in peacebuilding, meaningfully empowering them to be social change agents.

Youth Empowerment Foundation (YEF), similar to YSAT and founded in 2017 by former r0g_agency trainee Vuga William from the jHUB community in Juba, has been established to address conflict mitigation, reconciliation and media literacy development in the Adjumani Refugee Settlement in Northern Uganda.

Selected Diaspora & Global Initiatives

Radio La Benevolencija
Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation (La Benevolencija) is a Dutch NGO that empowers groups and individuals who are the target of hate speech and ensuing acts. It broadcasts radio soaps, discussions and educational programmes, in combination with grass roots activities that provide citizens in vulnerable societies with knowledge on how to recognise and resist manipulation to violence and how to heal trauma. **http://www.labenevolencija.org/**

Waayama Early Warning Software
Waayama Early Warning Software (Nigeria) provides local communities with a cloud-based early warning platform to systematically collect, analyze and communicate quantitative and qualitative information on current or impending threats to human security. Waayama is intended for micro-level or community-based early warning, with the goal to foster successful early response to prevent violence.
http://www.earlywarningnigeria.org/

SOUTH SUDAN: COUNSELLING & SUPPORT RESOURCES

South Sudan Psychosocial Support Programme (SSPP)
http://sspp.ngo/
South Sudan Psychosocial Support Programme (SSPP), a leading non-governmental organisation promoting and providing psychosocial and mental health care services to survivors of war and organised violence in South Sudan. Holistic mental health including sport and play activities provide an effective platform for learning and building new skills to overcome trauma and cope with stress.

Article 19 East Africa
Freedom of expression, Freedom of Information, Journalist Freedom and Safety
https://www.article19.org/pages/en/east-africa.html

Psychosocial Support For Correspondents & Researchers
"The counselling is determined by the levels of stress that a person is diagnosed with and combines physical, digital and psychosocial support as part of the protection. It also aims to educate the journalists to identify symptoms, manage them and monitor ongoing symptoms and where necessary, know when to seek professional support." **https://www.article19.org/join-the-debate.php/212/view/**

Basic Needs
Since 2013, BasicNeeds Kenya has been providing mentorship, project cycle management, and direct support to affected people, their carers and family members who have been affected by the war in South Sudan, in collaboration with South Sudan Psychosocial Programme (SSPP). **http://www.basicneeds.org/where-we-work/south-sudan/**

International Organisation for Migration, South Sudan – Psycho-social support
The experiences of violence, displacement and confinement among internally displaced persons (IDPs) have contributed to community wide emotional distress. IOM's programme is community driven, training IDPs on psychosocial support provision and enabling them to identify and develop activities that would best meet their own community's needs. **http://southsudan.iom.int/programmes/psychosocial**