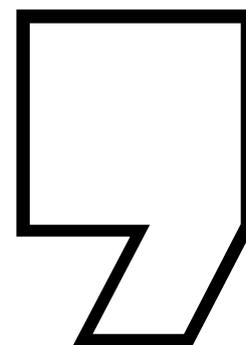




Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

# Livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance: An analysis of Pibor county, South Sudan from the perspective of displaced people



Working Paper 23

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# About us

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

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# Acronyms and glossary

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GRSS	Government of the Republic of South Sudan
IDP	Internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
Intersos	Italian non-governmental humanitarian aid agency
MedAir	Non-governmental humanitarian aid agency
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MSF-B	Médecins Sans Frontières - Belgium
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PAH	Polish Humanitarian Action
PHCC	Primary Health Care Centre
SLRC	Secure Livelihood Research Consortium
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SSRRC	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SSP	South Sudanese Pound
SSPS	South Sudan Police Service
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission In South Sudan
WFP	World Food Programme

boma	a village or group of villages, the lowest administrative unit
county	the highest administrative unit of local government structures followed by payam and boma
payam	intermediate administrative unit between county and <i>boma</i>
tukul	mud-walled hut

# Executive summary

This paper is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted by the **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium** (SLRC) South Sudan team in Juba, South Sudan in November 2013. This study followed qualitative research conducted in Uror and Nyirol Counties in northern Jonglei State in early 2013, described in the report 'Livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance: An analysis of Uror and Nyirol counties, South Sudan' (Maxwell et al., 2014a), and a household survey conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and SLRC in 2012, described in d'Errico et al. (forthcoming). The purpose of these quantitative and qualitative studies was to formulate a baseline and ongoing analysis of livelihoods, access to services, and people's perceptions of governance and participation in Jonglei State.

The research conducted for the present paper was initially intended to be carried out in Murle communities in Pibor County, following conversations with respondents in Juba and northern Jonglei that piqued our interest in community dynamics and inter-group relations among the Murle and with their neighbors. Due to violence in Pibor County which escalated in the summer of 2013 and displaced nearly the entire Murle population, we were unable to conduct planned fieldwork in the county; instead, we traveled to Juba in November 2013 to interview displaced persons from Pibor County about their lives prior to displacement. This fieldwork was completed in November 2013, preceding the political and violent conflict that broke out in December 2013; as such, we make reference to this larger conflict where useful, but it is not the focus of this paper. Many respondents understandably wished to talk to us more about the conditions in which they were living in Juba than about the lives they had left behind; this information is presented in an Annex to this paper so as to capture it and to honor their wishes.

Given that this paper analyses people's descriptions of their former lives in Pibor County, which were all but completely disrupted by the violence of mid-2013 (and earlier), and that the situation across South Sudan and particularly in eastern areas including Jonglei State has also changed dramatically since the time of our visit, we write here about life and livelihoods in Pibor County in the past tense. Many of our respondents spoke ardently of their desire for peace and the chance to return home and resume the lives they had left behind, and indeed there have been some positive signs since November 2013 that have allowed some of the population of Pibor County to return. We do not currently know, however, how the situation to which they return might compare to the one they left behind.

The SLRC research programme has **three main research questions**:

- 1 Internal state-building processes.** How do people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state in conflict-affected situations affect state legitimacy, state ability to provide social protection and services, and under what circumstances does this lead to state-building?
- 2 International engagement with the state.** How do international actors interact with the state and attempt to build the capacity of state institutions to deliver social protection and basic services?
- 3 Livelihoods and response.** What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

This work focused mainly on questions 1 and 3, though we have tried to address question 2 where information was available.

The livelihoods systems in rural areas of Pibor County have for decades been based primarily on agro-pastoralism. Murle living on the Boma plateau focus primarily on agriculture, while "lowland" or "Lotilla" Murle on the plains, including Pibor town, engage primarily in transhumant pastoralism, moving with their cattle between more established settlements and more temporary ones, depending on the season. In both cases, such livelihoods have come under increasing stress in recent decades from intra- and inter-community violence and conflict, uneven development and poor infrastructure, and erratic rainfall and other challenging climatic conditions. Respondents described some limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods activities available in population centres such as Pibor and Boma towns and other payam headquarters, though such options were available to a relatively small portion of the

population (probably overly represented in our interview sample, due to the likelihood that IDPs in Juba were displaced from more “urban” areas in Pibor County). Such activities included wage labour for the government, international agencies or other employers, trade, sale of livestock and agricultural products, and other casual labour.

We heard from many IDPs that their lives in Pibor County were far better than their lives in Juba, which is not surprising given that the situation in Juba is quite challenging for many Murle IDPs. However, even before the heightened violence of mid-2013 in Pibor, insecurity due to cattle raiding and inter-group conflicts as well as David Yau Yau’s rebellion and other non-state armed actors had significantly impacted livelihoods systems. It is likely true that there was a wider variety of income-generating activities available in Pibor County than to IDPs in Juba. It is also probably true that we heard a somewhat idealized account of pre-displacement life, and that the IDPs we spoke with in Juba had been living in population centres and were relatively better off in Pibor County than much of the population.

The escalation of violence in 2013 very negatively impacted livelihoods systems and forced many Murle to flee to other areas outside of Pibor County such as Juba, or to very remote locations within the county. If and when displaced Murle are able to return home, there will be a need for restocking and redistribution of livestock if pastoralism is to be restored as a major source of livelihood in Pibor County. Improved security, political will, and increased resources will be pivotal preconditions for any such efforts.

Pibor County has been and remains one of the most under-developed areas of South Sudan. Access to services is minimal, and essentially nonexistent outside of Pibor town and a few other population centres, which had schools and health facilities. Most of those facilities were operated by NGOs; respondents noted that the presence of the government in terms of service delivery throughout the county was negligible. At the same time, many respondents described services in a positive light, most likely because our population sample was largely from Pibor town and other relatively better-resourced areas. Much of the infrastructure for service delivery, such as school buildings and healthcare facilities, was deliberately targeted and destroyed in the violence of 2012 and 2013.

In contrast to our previous research in northern Jonglei, we did not hear any compassion toward the government for the lack of development in the county. Instead, many people openly blamed GRSS and the state government for what they believed was purposeful neglect of Pibor County infrastructure and services, believing that politics and discrimination against the Murle lay at the root of these and other problems, including the violence that displaced them to Juba.

Whether or not that’s true, the dynamics of conflict in Pibor County and, indeed, across Jonglei and South Sudan as a whole, are certainly complex. The conflict between David Yau Yau’s SSDM/Cobra Faction and the SPLA spilled over against civilians and led to the massive displacement of Murle that took place in early- and mid-2013, but even before 2013, the conflict was impacting civilians in Pibor County and elsewhere across the state and the country. Some respondents reported feeling “trapped” between the two sides, with both threatening their safety. They described having the same frustrations with GRSS as those Yau Yau decried, but popular support for the rebellion – which few people openly admitted to – waning as it failed to accomplish anything besides worsening security. Yet people said they had also been driven toward Yau Yau over time, first by grievances with GRSS such as marginalization, underdevelopment, and violent disarmament efforts, and then by government rhetoric and actions that lumped in all Murle civilians with the rebels, restricting their movements and threatening their safety. It is unclear how these underlying issues will be resolved to an extent that will mitigate and prevent future conflict.

At the same time, cycles of cattle raiding (a traditional and not necessarily problematic activity with important livelihoods and social implications), and other raiding and conflict between the Murle and neighboring groups – primarily the Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor – have long defined inter-community relations, but appear to have become more widespread and indiscriminately violent in recent years. Respondents characterized larger-scale inter-communal violence as another example of their marginalization at the hands of GRSS at both the national and state levels. Many believed that the state government in Bor in particular instigated the major attack on Pibor County by (mainly) Lou Nuer fighters in mid-2013, as well as previous assaults.

Cycles of violence in the county are also related to intra-Murle dynamics, particularly competition between age-sets for dominance and the rights of young men to marry. These dynamics are poorly understood by most observers, and have been paid little attention in the various peace processes seeking to bring stability to Pibor County. The failure to respect the fundamental social architecture of Murle society and its differences from other South Sudanese ethnic groups is problematic, and likely to lead only to further violence. A peace accord between Yau Yau and GRSS that was finalized in April 2014 is a promising step toward ending some of this conflict, but may offer little stability unless underlying issues and dynamics are addressed with sufficient urgency and fairness, according to the perceptions of both rebel actors and civilians.

Overall impressions of governance, and specifically of GRSS, varied among our Murle respondents, though most agreed on feeling that they felt that the Murle are underrepresented and marginalized at the (Jonglei) state and national levels, and that this has been true since the colonial era. Respondents felt that their representation and participation were purposely limited, which negatively affected their perceptions of the state and national government.

Access to information and opportunities for participation seem to vary according to various factors such as gender, age, level of education and access to government institutions in Pibor County. In particular, young women seem to have very little access to information, and can only marginally participate in community decision-making and political processes. At the local level in Pibor County, in both rural and (relatively) urban areas, there existed some venues for participation such as community consultations and meetings conducted by chiefs and administrators. The decisions taken and the statements collected at these meetings were, however, not necessarily taken into account at higher levels of government.

Major questions facing the Murle and GRSS at the time of this writing include the implementation of peace agreements between GRSS and Yau Yau, the resolution of wider national conflict deeply affecting Jonglei State, and the resumption of both GRSS and international aid and development funding and activities that may benefit Pibor County. It is unclear whether and how the resources necessary for recovery and increased stability of the lives and livelihoods of people in Pibor County will be made available to people who return home and rebuild now that the conflict has formally ended. Perhaps the biggest question is whether attitudes governing the relationships between the Murle, their neighbors, and GRSS will have truly shifted enough to allow for a move from “mere” cessation of major hostilities to actual peace, stability, and development. It is difficult to see such changes happening in the short term, particularly given the current national context, but we have to hope the many foreseeable challenges can be surmounted.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 SLRC study background and objectives

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six-year global research programme exploring livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict-affected situations. Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Irish Aid, SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict. SLRC is undertaking research in eight focus countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. The South Sudan research programme is led by the Feinstein International Centre, based at Tufts University, in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), swisspeace, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the University of Juba, and the South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

What is now the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) enjoyed a great deal of popularity throughout many parts of the country in its first years of existence, due to the ultimate success of the long struggle for political autonomy that culminated in independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011. However, experience from other newly independent countries suggests that such political goodwill and sense of state legitimacy often ebbs away over time if political independence is not followed by stable state-building and economic progress that translate into practical improvements in income and livelihoods at the local (household and community) level (Brahimi 2007). South Sudan has received one of the larger outpourings of state-building aid in the world, but the road toward stability is long and difficult, and GRSS has faced tremendous challenges in its brief existence. The SLRC South Sudan study is exploring these challenges by rigorously investigating a set of research questions, which are stated below. We hope that through regular engagement with key stakeholders, as well as strategic dissemination of research outputs, this research will ultimately feed into policy discussions among government, donor, and NGO actors, despite the dynamic situation in South Sudan.

The present paper is based on fieldwork conducted in Juba in November 2013, at a time of relative stability for the young country, compared to the events which were soon to follow. As the world knows, that stability—which was certainly already shaky at the time of our visit—completely broke down shortly thereafter, in the form of a political crisis within the governing Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) that quickly ballooned into violence engulfing a part of the country in December 2013. The dynamics of this crisis – on-going at the time of this writing – have been extensively discussed and dissected in publications and media fora, including commentary by SLRC team members,<sup>1</sup> and therefore are not addressed here. Instead, this paper presents a perspective on another crisis that long preceded the violent conflict that began in December 2013: the situation in Pibor County in southern Jonglei State, where tensions between different ethnic groups, armed non-state actors, and the national military have mixed explosively for years.

Pibor County is home to the Murle ethnic group, of which there are approximately 150,000 in South Sudan, in addition to the smaller Jie and Kachipo/Suri ethnic groups. Cycles of cattle raiding and revenge attacks between the Murle and their neighbors have long been a facet of life in Jonglei, though more recently such activities have become entangled in newer definitions and networks of criminality, as well as broader armed inter-communal and anti-government conflicts. For several years, a rebel movement led by David Yau Yau has pitted his group of mainly—though not entirely—ethnic Murle fighters against the GRSS and its Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). The lines between ‘traditional’ cattle raiding, other types of raiding and inter-group conflict, and conflicts between the government and various groups have grown increasingly blurry. Yau Yau signed a ceasefire with GRSS in January 2014 and subsequent peace agreement in April 2014, but not before both sides had carried out devastating violence and human rights abuses against civilians, ultimately leading to the displacement of nearly the

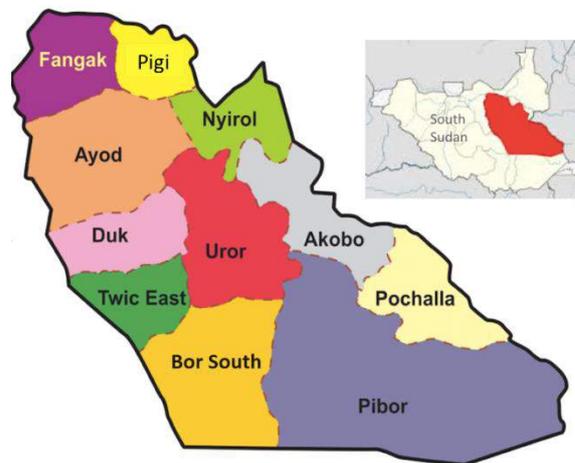
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.riftvalley.net/event/south-sudan-peace-possible#.U4iiBXYQQQI>

entire population of Pibor County in mid-2013 (HRW, 2013). A part of this displaced population ended up in Juba, and they were the focus of this study.

Against that backdrop, our own previous SLRC research among Lou Nuer communities in northern Jonglei earlier in 2013 stimulated our desire to better understand community dynamics among the Murle in Pibor County, particularly how those dynamics contributed to violence between the Murle and neighboring groups. At the outset of the SRLC programme, our research plan involved only parts of northern Jonglei and Upper Nile States, but the overwhelming message of research participants in northern Jonglei was that the security situation – and in particular, Murle raiding – was by far the most significant factor impacting their lives and livelihoods. We therefore shifted our focus to Pibor County and planned a visit in late 2013 or early 2014. This plan shifted again in late summer 2013 toward the large population of Murle internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Juba, because of the security situation in Pibor – nearly the entire population of the county had fled either to Juba, across the border to Ethiopia, Kenya, or Uganda, or into hiding in the bush, and would have been nearly impossible to locate and interview people in Pibor County itself, not to mention concerns about the security of the research team itself.

**Figure 1: Map of Jonglei showing counties**



Source: Conflict Dynamics International

## **1.2 Research questions and methodology**

This qualitative study explores livelihoods, access to social services and people’s perceptions of participation and governance, particularly in Pibor County, in southern Jonglei State. The following three areas of inquiry drive SLRC fieldwork:

- 1 Internal state-building processes. How do people’s perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state in conflict-affected situations affect state legitimacy, state ability to provide social protection and services, and under what circumstances does this lead to state-building?
- 2 International engagement with the state. How do international actors interact with the state and attempt to build the capacity of state institutions to deliver social protection and basic services?
- 3 Livelihoods and response. What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

A qualitative protocol was developed in order to address these questions, which the team first used in January and February 2013 in interviews in Juba and northern Jonglei and adapted only slightly for use in interviews with Murle IDPs in Juba in November 2013. Three researchers interviewed a total of 124 people in five main areas of Juba where IDPs have settled: Khor William, Suk Sita, Hai Jaborona, Konyo Konyo, and Mess Tamanin.

Interviews were conducted with the support of translators, and notes written longhand and later transcribed onto computers. Researchers noted as many details as possible about respondents,

including sex, marital status, education status, length of displacement, and other factors. It was not possible to collect reliable data on respondents' age because many people do not know their birthdate or age. Furthermore, the category of "youth" in South Sudan is often used to describe anyone under the age of approximately 40. We used the descriptor "youth" to denote young—usually unmarried—adults, and an "other" category to describe those in between youth and elder status. In some cases respondents described themselves with these labels, though most were applied subjectively by the research team according to appeared to be the best descriptor for the given respondent, context, and interview responses. Imprecise as these age categories are, they were the best available option to capture ambiguous age dynamics, though they do make age-disaggregated analysis inconclusive.

Interview notes were entered on computer the same day or as soon as possible after interviews were completed. Qualitative analysis was conducted with the help of Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software package enabling coding and comparison of interview excerpts. Three research team members used the software to code and analyse the interviews, resulting in 912 excerpts, which were then examined more closely using the software's search and analysis functions in light of the research questions and the themes by which this paper is organized, as well as those emerging from the interviews themselves. This process helped us to identify patterns across different interviews and categories of respondents, including disaggregation by sex and (general) age as much as possible. Where necessary for some of the more complex comparisons, analysts also returned to the original interview notes in order to be able to put certain trends or findings into the broader context of the interview.

### **1.3 Limitations to the study**

Exploring livelihoods and services in Pibor County through the lens of displaced persons in Juba generates several challenges. First, while it was not our intention to identify a random sample of the Murle population, the fact that we were unable to go to Pibor means that we are almost certainly missing some perspectives. In some cases, the ability of displaced persons to leave Pibor County and travel to Juba appears to have been somewhat up to chance – if they happened to be somewhere – primarily Pibor town – from which a UN evacuation flight was departing, they got on the plane. In other cases, displacement to Juba is clearly linked to social connections and status: IDPs in Juba often had relatives there already, working for the government or other organizations in Juba or Pibor, and/or other connections to resources and places to live (often meaning a compound in which to build a very simple and temporary shelter, but still a relative advantage). Some had the wherewithal to purchase tickets on a commercial flight out of Pibor town. While many IDPs fled to Juba in July and August 2013, others came earlier in 2013 or before, fleeing violence that has been ongoing since before independence.

This caveat should not suggest uniformity of perspectives noted in this paper; indeed, we found that even respondents whose relatives had long worked in the SPLM or fought with the SPLA might be outspokenly critical of the government, and families living together in a shared compound might contain members who had participated on many sides of the various conflicts in which Pibor County, Jonglei State, and all of South Sudan have been mired in recent years. Yet, we are obviously missing perspectives of those who fled to the bush in Pibor County and those who crossed the border to Ethiopia or elsewhere to escape violence; in no way do we purport to present the views of all Murle in this paper (and would not, even if we had been able to visit those other populations as well).

Not being able to travel to Pibor County put us at a disadvantage in terms of understanding the immediate surroundings through our own observation, and made us entirely reliant on respondents' descriptions of their previous lives and the conditions under which they lived and accessed services. Displacement – along with the violence and instability that cause it – may breed nostalgia for and idealization of the situation left behind, as well as simple recollection challenges, but we had no way to verify the accounts we heard.

We sensed that some respondents wanted to give us the impression that their situation was perhaps more dire than it really was. Some respondents initially claimed that they had no sources of income and no support in Juba; only later did they reluctantly talk about income and support when it came up in conversation. On some occasions we were told that all cattle in an area had been looted, and then received conflicting reports from others who said that some herds remained. The team heard similar contradictory reports in northern Jonglei during previous fieldwork; we came to think of this of and refer

to this as the “needs assessment narrative,” as it seemed to be based in a mistaken impression that we were there to assess their needs and, in turn, disburse aid (thus “rewarding” those with the most desperate stories).

Some respondents were unwilling to discuss the situation in Pibor County, wishing to focus instead on their current challenges in Juba. This is entirely understandable, as their immediate needs would certainly be the more urgent concern than the situation they left behind. It led, however, to more “accidental” data collection regarding the IDP situation in Juba than we had intended, and perhaps less information on Pibor County than desired. We include the findings on life in Juba in an annex here, in order to honor the wishes of respondents as well as capture the information.

Another limitation is that Pibor town and Pibor County are both often referred to simply as “Pibor,” and sometimes spoken of indistinguishably, particularly by respondents who previously lived in Pibor town. We clarified as much as possible in interviews, but it is possible that we mistook some discussion of events or circumstances in the town for the broader county, and vice versa. For the sake of clarity, we refer to each with its appropriate administrative descriptor (i.e. “county” or “town”) throughout this paper.

## 2 Livelihoods in Pibor County

### 2.1 Livelihood systems

Pastoralism and agriculture were major sources of livelihoods in rural Murle communities in Pibor County prior to conflict and displacement. The area inhabited by Murle includes two different types of landscape: the Lotilla plain and the Boma plateau (Andretta, 1989; Arensen, 2012; McCallum, 2013). “Lowland” Murle, or those living on the plains, predominantly engage in transhumant pastoralism (3, 26, 27, 30, 35, 39, 47, 49, 57).<sup>2</sup> Important livestock products are milk, meat, butter and blood (1, 3, 24, 30, 39, 45, 46, 47). Besides cattle other small livestock such as goats, sheep and chicken are kept (USAID, 2001). Despite the strong emphasis on pastoralism and the societal and cultural significance of cattle, lowland Murle cultivate on a limited scale (3, 21, 24, 26, 30, 31, 46, 47). Important crops grown in the plains are sorghum, maize and pumpkin (1b, 3, 31, 46). Murle living in the highlands and hills in Boma sub-county, where the soil is fertile and rainfall consistent allowing for two harvests per year, are more focused on agriculture (Andretta, 1989; 27, USAID, 2001; 49, 36b). In the highlands, the main agricultural products are sorghum, maize, sweet potatoes, okra, and ground nuts (27, 47). Some Murle agropastoralists sell livestock and part of their agricultural and livestock products in markets to generate income (1, 30, 36b, 47, 60). The climate regularly affects agropastoralist activities in Pibor County with floods and droughts. The arid zones in the plains are particularly prone to droughts (Omondi, 2012; USAID, 2001).

Hunting is also an important source of food (3, 5, 21, 24), though a chief said that hunting activities have been restricted by the government (1). Fish are caught in rainy season water pools, swamps and rivers such as Jom, Nyandit, Pibor and Oboth Rivers (1, 3, 21, 24, 26, 31). Wild fruits are regularly collected (21, 24). Game, fish, and wild fruits as well as meat and blood are important foods during the hunger gap (May to June) and during periods of food insecurity and crisis in general (3, 5, 20). Similar strategies of livelihood diversification were applied during the past civil war (1983-2005) (USAID, 2001). Food and other goods can be bought in markets in *payam* and county headquarters, but overall, trading activities are limited in Pibor County, due to unavailability of goods and people’s lack of money with which to purchase them. During the rainy season, few goods reach markets anywhere in the county due to the minimal road network and transportation options (3). Trade and markets have also been adversely affected by armed conflicts, particularly since 2013 (32).

In times of hardship, kinship support is an important coping strategy in Murle communities (4, 5, 11, 21). Impoverished households and individuals are usually supported by relatives with food and cattle for milking, bleeding and meat (5, 12). If relatives have the means but refuse to support their kin, their reputations are tarnished (12). The sale of cattle and firewood to buy food are both regular means of income and in some cases coping mechanisms employed as necessary by those with access to such assets and markets (1, 11, 20, 22). Another mechanism for dealing with hunger and failed harvests is exchange and mobility between Murle living in the plains and in the highlands. In the past, when communities in the lowland areas such as Pibor town experienced hunger, they have moved to Boma, and vice versa, and have been provided with food and other support by relatives and friends (2). Trans-local networks of mutual support are of great importance not only within Pibor County but also between Pibor County, Juba and other areas where Murle community members live.

Age and gender are important societal categories that influence the division of labour in Pibor County. In the lowland plains, young, unmarried men and women commonly herd livestock belonging to their extended family (Andretta, 1989; 30). Young men are tasked with protecting cattle and homesteads, and engaging in cattle raiding and warfare (3, 14, 30, 32). While young men, women and older children seasonally move with most of the livestock, families with young children and elder community members generally stay in semi-permanent homesteads or settlements and towns, keeping a few head of cattle and engage in agriculture and other income-generating activities (24, 30, 39, 47, 57). Inhabitants of

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers in brackets refer to the interview numbers.

Pibor town often own cattle, but they usually leave their cattle with relatives in rural areas (22, 24, 57, 60).

Gender roles are well-defined in Murle communities. Men are usually the primary decision-makers in households, and they represent their households in the public sphere (32, 36). Numerous households, in particular households of more affluent men, are polygamous (42, 44, 55). Due to the different livelihood systems between Boma Murle and Lotilla Murle, gender roles, work division, socio structural aspects and settlement patterns differ between lowland/Lotilla and highland/Boma Murle.<sup>3</sup> In the plains, both men and women work in cultivation, livestock keeping and in fishing (36b, 39, Arensen 2012), though only men hunt (32, 36). However, men provide the larger share of labour for pastoralism and women for agriculture (Andretta, 1989). Although women are much involved in agricultural activities, it is usually their husbands who decide on the sale of agricultural products, which include honey and homemade beer, among others (32, 36, 36b). In the lowlands, women cut grass to build houses (8, 39, 47), which are traditionally made of grass in Lotilla Murle communities. Lotilla Murle women furthermore cook, engage in domestic work, fetch water, collect firewood and take care of children (36, 47). Among Boma Murle however, women are little engaged in agriculture and they do not fish or construct houses. Their primary activities are domestic work and childcare. McCallum (2013) notes that Boma Murle women are consequently more dependent on the support of their husbands.

Pibor County has no large towns, but two larger settlements – Pibor town and Boma – in addition to other smaller *payam* headquarters. The latter usually comprise a few public buildings such as a payam office building, a school, a clinic and a small market (13). The majority of the interviewed Murle IDPs had been living in Pibor town before they fled to Juba. Inhabitants of Pibor town reported having been engaged in different income generating activities before the armed conflict. Some men were employed by the local government, police, SPLA, in schools or health clinics and by NGOs and international agencies (1, 2, 11, 13, 22, 28, 42, 33, 44, 55). Other male inhabitants had been traders or engaged in casual work (23, 25, 57, 60). Female interviewees had been working in restaurants, tea shops or as cooks in schools and NGO compounds to make a living (10, 22, 30, 42, 44, 51, 60). Other female respondents had sold wood and charcoal, or washed clothes and fetched water for wealthier families (22, 25, 39, 42, 44, 53). Some respondents had been living in rural contexts and had engaged in agro-pastoralism before the armed conflict erupted in 2012 and 2013. Due to insecurity they fled to Pibor town where they had lived from casual labour as their only viable source of income (11, 12, 25, 28, 39).

Agro-pastoralist activities are shaped by the seasons. In Pibor County the rainy season starts in June but early rains are common in April (Arensen, 2012). This is also the season when cultivation begins (39). During the dry season, youth living in the plains move with their cattle in search for water and pasture. But with the start of the rainy seasons the highly mobile Lotilla Murle living in rural areas turn back to the semi-permanent homesteads where they cultivate small fields (Andretta, 1989; Arensen, 2012). The early months of the rainy season – March, April, May and June – are usually the season of food shortages because grain supplies have been depleted. Yet, milk production is highest during the rainy season in May and June when fresh grass is available in plenty (1b). New early crops become available and food security improves toward the end of July and August. Maize is an early crop, with the harvest of other crops such as sorghum and pumpkin following in July, August (1, 1b) and September (Arensen, 2012). October and November are the months during which food is available in plenty, cattle and youth are still in the semi-permanent homesteads and social life is most active. Youth engage in social activities, and courtship and weddings take place. In December large herds of game migrate to the north through Murle inhabited area and Murle hunt antelopes and kobs (Arensen 2012).

During the peak of the dry season from January to March/April, young male herders move with the livestock to swamps, riverine areas and water points toward the border with Pochalla, Dinka Bor areas, and Lou Nuer areas in Akobo County (1, 3). The rivers Nyandit and Jom bordering Lou Nuer area in Akobo County are important sources of water for Murle livestock from Lekuangle in the dry season. Murle cattle from Gumuruk are driven to Anyidi close to Bor County and Murle cattle from Pibor are brought to the Okello-Obboth River bordering Pochalla (3). Such seasonal cattle movement during the dry

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<sup>3</sup> Despite these differentiations numerous kinship and affine ties exist between Boma and Lotilla Murle. Moreover, Murle are mobile and some move from Boma to Pibor and vice versa (Felix da Costa, 2013).

season is a central source of strife and insecurity among the Murle and with their neighbors (3). Disputes frequently emerge when different communities' livestock mix, when bulls fight and get injured and when youth raid the herds of other groups (3).<sup>4</sup> Families and elders who remain in the settlements during the early days of the dry season usually keep three to four head of milking cattle in the homesteads while the rest of the cattle move with the herders (30).

When the water level of the rivers subsides at the end of the rainy season, Murle community members engage in fishing (Arensen 2012). Around the same time that the fishing season ends, milk production decreases and grain supplies are depleted, so married women and men and small children in rural areas close their homesteads and move to join young men and women in the cattle camps in the swamps where milk and game are more available (Arensen 2012). When the swamps are drying up, Murle families move to groves of balanites trees where they live from wild fruits until the rains starts, at which point they return back to their homesteads (Arensen, 2012).

## 2.2 Livestock and land ownership

Inhabitants of the plains noted that they had owned large herds of cattle before their livestock had been looted in conflict over the past several years. A chief stated that he had possessed 400 head of cattle (6) and a female respondent said that her family had owned about 800 head of cattle before the armed violence erupted (22). Clearly, cattle wealth had varied between different households. Less affluent households possessed fewer – up to 40 – head of cattle in the past (12, 24, 35, 39, 57).

Murle living on the Boma plateau keep far fewer cattle than their lowland kin (27, 47). In the past, the highlands have been affected by tsetse fly infestations that have devastated cattle herds and contributed to shifting livelihoods activities (McCallum, 2013); that said, Boma Murle often own some cattle, sometimes received through the marriage of daughters with Lotilla Murle (27, 36b). Cattle belonging to Boma Murle are often herded by relatives living in the plains. Marriage of daughters is an important source for cattle and other wealth for Murle living in both the highlands and the plains (22, 24, 31, 43, 45, 46, 47, 60), though cattle are less significant as bride wealth in the Boma Plateau (McCallum, 2013). In numerous agro-pastoralist groups including Murle communities, men pay bride wealth to the families of their brides. One respondent noted that bride wealth in Murle communities is set at 42 head of cattle, though others mentioned different numbers, and McCallum notes that price varies depending on various factors including fertility (McCallum 2013). Observers have also noted the bride wealth expectations have been steadily increasing across South Sudan in recent years (Sommers and Schwartz, 2011). Increasing bride price is often cited as a reason for escalating cattle raiding and related violence in Jonglei and elsewhere (Sommers and Schwartz, 2011; McCallum, 2013). It is also said to contribute to child marriage, as the marriage of daughters provides “an important way for families to access much-needed resources, such as cattle, money, and other gifts” (Human Rights Watch, 2013: 4).

In the plains, land use rights are temporary thus of continuing usufruct and Lotilla Murle can move everywhere within the Murle territory (Andretta, 1989; Arensen, 2012; McCallum, 2013). In the Boma plateau, where agriculture is the main source of livelihoods and land is a contested resource land ownership is more regulated and land is inherited in the patriline.<sup>5</sup> (Andretta, 1989; McCallum, 2013).

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<sup>4</sup> One respondent suggested that in the past, Murle used to migrate to Dinka Bor areas and there were no serious problems, but that conflict arose beginning in the 1980s (1).

<sup>5</sup> The patriline is the line of descent from a male ancestor to his descendants.

### **Box 1: Cattle raiding and livestock markets**

We heard similar stories of total depletion of herds among the Lou Nuer in northern Jonglei, who primarily blamed the Murle for taking their cattle. As each group – at least somewhat credibly, according to observers – reports declining livestock ownership due to raiding (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014), this begs the question of where all the cattle have gone. Broadly and historically speaking, pastoralists might lend, trade or sell a few of their cattle locally to support relatives or their own families in times of need, but are generally unlikely to engage in larger-scale sale or trade, as their wealth is measured in cattle. Raided cattle were used to increase personal wealth and replenish stocks depleted by previous raiding and disease.

Since the end of the civil war, however, those dynamics have shifted, as some politicians and businessmen have increasingly profited from the sale of stolen cattle across the border into Ethiopia and Kenya, and brought rural herders into the market system with them in the sense that they are often hired to care for and transport wealthy people's cattle (Small Arms Survey, 2012). There are no data available on the frequency of or attitudes toward personal sale of cattle in Jonglei, but other pastoralist communities in east Africa have seen shifts in recent decades toward acceptance of and engagement with cattle sales on the open market (Fleisher, 2000; Ekuam, 2009; Laswaiet *al.*, 2011), thereby lending at least cursory support to the hypothesis that pastoralists may be increasingly selling off rather than keeping stolen cattle.

According to some observers we spoke with, the Murle have limited access to cattle markets in South Sudan because of insecurity and threats to them in market destinations such as Bor and Juba. As a result, if they are selling cattle, it is likely to be through middlemen into South Sudanese markets or cross-border (but we have no direct evidence on either). Regardless of destination, such sales are obviously illicit, and the tools for effectively tracking cattle remain in the early stages of effective use (see Practical Action, 2004), so it is difficult to get any more concrete data on the actual trade in such animals, particularly across borders. Official numbers for the aggregate cattle herd size in Jonglei have not changed at all from 2009 to 2012 (WFP/FAO 2013), highlighting the mystery of what is actually happening with stolen cattle.

### **2.3 Cattle raiding, the armed conflict and its effects on livelihoods**

Armed conflict in Pibor County has very negatively impacted the livelihoods of its inhabitants (2, 32, 36b). This will be discussed further below; here we describe the livelihoods impacts specifically. Many Murle have been displaced, and have thus been prevented from engaging in their previous income-generating activities (2); in addition, their assets such as livestock, crops and trading goods have been depleted (2, 19, 31, 32).

Livestock have been looted and killed, according to respondents, mainly by Lou Nuer from Uror and Akobo Counties and also by Dinka from Bor (2, 3, 19, 32, 35, 48). A number of respondents claimed that they have lost all their livestock due to raiding (2, 6, 10, 19, 22, 25, 35, 39, 48, 60, 57), while a few said that not all livestock had been raided, but that some cattle were still kept by youth in secure areas in Pibor County (3, 24). There are no official figures on how much livestock ownership has declined, but certainly, such a loss of cattle – the major source of livelihoods – increases the vulnerability of affected households (31).

Due to the armed conflict during which attackers looted crops, burned houses, raided cattle and destroyed tools (03, 20) many Murle agro-pastoralists and town dwellers were displaced. A group of women stated: "We had just been running. Life is destroyed" (2). As a consequence of the displacement, many have been forced to stop cultivation, and have missed a planting season (32). Moreover, in Juba many Murle IDPs lack income generating activities (further discussed in the annex). The impact of the

loss of this planting season will be felt over several years, even if they have since been able to return home. Furthermore, exchange and mutual support between highland and lowland Murle, were severely impacted by insecurity (2). An international agency employee noted that the key indicators of food security were disturbing, as food consumption and food diversity were affected very much by the crisis (32).

Murle IDPs noted that if security improved in Pibor County, they would return home and resume cultivation, hunting and fishing (24, 36a, 39). In terms of restocking cattle, respondents noted that they get cattle when their daughters are married (24, 31), and that livestock can also be bought in markets or exchanged for maize (24). Notably, similarly to Lou Nuer respondents in previous SLRC fieldwork, no Murle interviewee referred to cattle raiding as a way of restocking cattle, though it undoubtedly takes place in some areas.

Several respondents underlined that Pibor County, and particularly Pibor town, had been relatively good places to live before the eruption of armed violence. Various sources of livelihoods were available, and people were able to work in trade, grow crops, and own and sell cattle in Pibor County (1, 35, 36a, 42). People had enough to eat (22, 57), though that is quite likely not true of the whole population. A widow said that before the fighting between the SPLA and Yau Yau “in Pibor town we could do small things, life [in Pibor County] was comfortable” (22)<sup>6</sup>. Another female respondent said “We had cattle and could grow crops. Life was good” (35).

## 2.4 Summary

The livelihoods systems in rural areas of Pibor County have for decades been based on agro-pastoralism, fishing, hunting and the collection of wild fruits. Whereas Murle living on the Boma plateau focus on agriculture, Lotilla Murle living in the plains engage predominately in transhumant pastoralism. In the payam headquarters and in Boma and Pibor towns, other opportunities for income generation exist; these include wage labour for the government and international agencies, trade, casual labour and the sale of livestock, livestock and agricultural products and other goods. The escalation of violence of 2013 very negatively impacted livelihoods systems and forced many Murle to flee to other areas outside of Pibor County such as Juba or to very remote locations within the county. The situation in Juba is challenging for many Murle IDPs, so it is not surprising that several respondents stressed that their lives in Pibor County before the eruption of armed conflict had been much better than their situation in Juba.

At the same time, it is quite possible that people gave us idealized descriptions of livelihoods systems in Pibor County. Even before the clashes between David Yau Yau’s armed group and the SPLA, and the attacks against civilians, insecurity caused by cattle raiding and inter- and intra-communal violence had negatively affected livelihood systems in Pibor County (discussed in the conflict section below). Erratic rainfall has brought recurrent drought and flooding, with serious consequences for agro-pastoralism. Furthermore, lack of infrastructure affects trade, and due to isolation and limited development, there are very limited employment opportunities for youth besides agro-pastoralism. Yet, in contrast to Juba, a variety of income generating activities existed in Pibor County allowing many Murle community members to make their own living and to depend less on the support of their relatives. If displaced Murle are able to return home in the near future, there will be a need of some restocking and redistribution of livestock to foster pastoralism as major source of livelihood in Pibor County. Yet, improved security is a pivotal precondition for any sustainable attempts to support such activities.

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<sup>6</sup> see income generating activities noted on page 12

## 3 Services in Pibor County

All of South Sudan has struggled with the construction of infrastructure and service delivery, but Jonglei is widely acknowledged to have remained behind the curve, and Pibor County is probably even further behind. Little progress has been made since independence on constructing genuine service delivery systems and infrastructure anywhere in Jonglei (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014). Service access in Pibor County has remained minimal, at best; a recent policy brief by the South Sudanese think tank Sudd Institute called the county “one of the remotest places in South Sudan” (Mayia and Jok, 2013).

What services existed there prior to conflict were centered primarily in Pibor town, which had a hospital, several schools, boreholes for water, and some (likely minimal) social protection and livelihood assistance in the form of food and seed distributions. Most of these were run by international agencies and NGOs (1, 2, 17, 19, 24, 25, 38, 39, 42, 43); the government provided some education and seed distribution services in the town (10).

Little or nothing was available in the rest of the county, except for boreholes in some communities and several small schools in payam headquarters (13, 16, 22, 25, 39, 42, 43). Given the extremely low levels of development and high mobility of the population in Pibor County, most payam headquarters “towns” consisted of little more than a small market and a few *tukuls*, and many people only rarely traveled to towns (13, 16, 22, 25, 39).

Many respondents were able to state with specificity what the government provided (mainly schools) and which NGOs provided various services. It was consistently stated, for example, that Merlin operated the clinic in Boma town, while the larger clinic in Pibor town was operated by MSF (1, 2, 19, 22, 36a, 36b). At the same time, there were some conflicting reports about providers, with some respondents stating that the government operated schools in some communities and larger towns, where others said that there were no government services available (1, 2, 10, 17, 25).

Many people told us that services in Pibor County were notably better than what they were able to access in Juba. This was particularly true of people who had lived in or had access to Pibor town, and to a lesser but still fairly positive extent from people who had lived in Boma, Gumuruk, and Likuangole. It must be stressed that this is both relative and subjective. It is difficult to know just how much such statements reflect actual satisfaction with services, or simply nostalgia for respondents’ lives prior to the violence and displacement that engulfed them in 2013 (or earlier), and frustration with the availability of services and resources in Juba. One senior GRSS official stated that limited services such as a primary school and health clinic were available in a few towns in Pibor County but the rest of the county “nothing was available” – roads, healthcare, or anything else (16). Yet, a female respondent living in Suk Sita in Juba told us that “before, [service access] was very good. It has now changed. The clinic has been destroyed. The school has been closed because of the conflict” (44); others said the same (2, 3, 10, 48, 53, 55, 56). Altogether, it is clear that services in Pibor County were minimal and of very limited availability as well as poor quality; respondent satisfaction likely reflects relatively good access reflective of living in population centres, especially Pibor town and, simply put, very low standards.

### 3.1 Water and sanitation

As we saw in previous SLRC fieldwork in northern Jonglei, some kind of improved water source appears to be the most widely available “service” in Pibor County, though that is, of course, a highly relative distinction. Moreover, borehole construction is generally a one-time service that often suffers later for lack of upkeep.

Several interviewees said that there were attempts by NGOs to drill boreholes in their areas, such as Gumuruk payam, but that the attempts were unsuccessful because the water table was too low (46, 56), leaving everyone in payam headquarters and surrounding areas dependent upon river water (46, 53, 54). In an area with so little presence and activity of service providers, the effort was clearly notable even though the outcome was unsatisfactory.

Other respondents noted that water access was limited even where functional boreholes were available in places such as Pibor town. An inter-agency humanitarian needs assessment mission conducted in Pibor town and Dorein, a village relatively close (but still six hours walking) to Pibor town, in January 2014 found that there were 24 boreholes in Pibor town, of which 17 were actually functional. However, only two of the boreholes were in civilian areas; the rest were in areas of town occupied by the military. This suggests that they were inaccessible to civilians, though their status and accessibility prior to 2014 are unknown (IRNA, 2014). The mission also found a “water yard” with a solar pump system and large storage tank, two tap stands, and 12 water taps, not all of which were functional. Most households had containers such as jerry cans for collecting and storing water, though they were not kept clean. In Dorein, the mission found no improved water source at all, and that most households lacked water collection containers; those with containers used calabash. Bacteriological tests carried out on the river, the only water source for the community, in Dorein found it significantly contaminated by human and livestock excrement (ibid.).

One woman noted that she often had to spend over an hour waiting in a queue for water from a borehole in Pibor town; she would then fill enough jerry cans to have water for two days (44). Consistent with our findings in northern Jonglei as well as norms across South Sudan, water provision for the household is the responsibility of women, often with the help of both male and female children. Women and children may spend hours every day walking to and from water sources, waiting in queues, and carrying heavy jerry cans home – a standard five-gallon jerry can weighs approximately 40 pounds/18 kilograms when filled.

A woman who had moved from her village to Pibor town before being displaced to Juba said that she had had access to a borehole in Pibor town but not in the village, and that many villages in Pibor County had no improved water access (39). This description contrasts with northern Jonglei as well as other states in South Sudan, where most bomas had a borehole constructed at some point, if not necessarily consistently functional. The respondent described walking two hours each way to reach the river and carry water home for her family in the village.

McCallum (2013; 160-161) points out that the Murle are “a very mobile community,” with “continual movement” between wet and dry season settlements. Such mobility – based partly on the *need for* water – somewhat precludes consistent access to inherently stationary services such as water access via borehole. At the same time, settlement and migratory patterns are fairly consistent; movement should not be viewed as a constraint or an excuse not to construct boreholes and other kinds of improved water sources, but must be taken into account so that water needs are realistically addressed.

Sanitation facilities were not mentioned by respondents, perhaps because they are not thought of as a service to be provided, and probably because, in all but a very few areas, they are nonexistent. The needs assessment mission in early 2014 found that the few sanitation facilities in Pibor town were unmanaged and overflowing, leaving people no other option but to defecate in the open. This was also the only option in Dorein, leading to polluted drinking water, as mentioned above (IRNA, 2014).

### **3.2 Health**

As Downie (2012) pointed out, “the line between emergency relief and health development is often blurred in South Sudan” due to the immense and overlapping needs of conflict- and crisis-affected populations, returning refugees, and the population as a whole, within a context of extremely minimal healthcare infrastructure. The availability of healthcare throughout South Sudan has been negligible since long before independence, and while there have been some efforts at overall improvement in recent years – supported primarily by international agencies and NGOs working through the Ministry of Health –services have remained weak (Bennett et al., 2010). There is also variability in available services both between and within states; while many larger towns and payam headquarters have some sort of health facility (which may or may not have any consistent resources or staff), many people live a long walk from such facilities and have no access to transport, making them effectively unavailable.

Health facilities were reportedly available in several of the payam headquarters in Pibor County, though the only one with reportedly consistent staffing and resources was the MSF clinic in Pibor town. Several

respondents noted that MSF (1, 4), along with the Italian NGO, COOPI (Cooperazione Internazionale) (4), had renovated several old buildings in Pibor town. These became the MSF hospital, which offered services that were, according to respondents, free and largely satisfactory (1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 21, 22, 31, 38, 39, 42, 55, 57). This hospital was specifically targeted and burned to the ground during the violence of mid-2013 in an attack that has been blamed on SPLA soldiers.<sup>7</sup> We were told that MSF staff continued even after the attack to try to provide some services and provide medicine to town residents in need (2), though the IRNA mission to Pibor in January 2014 found the MSF facilities empty. MSF also ran outreach clinics in Gumuruk town (3, 44, 53, 56) and in Likuangole (26, 31) as well as Dorein (IRNA, 2014). Merlin ran a hospital in Boma town that offered basic services (27, 36a, 43).

According to the IRNA mission, Pibor town's health facilities other than MSF consisted of a privately run Ethiopian clinic which was not apparently operational in early 2014, and a GRSS (Ministry of Health)-run Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU) staffed by one nurse and a pharmacist, neither of whom was being paid for their work (IRNA, 2014). Illnesses treated at the PHCU commonly included malaria, gastrointestinal and upper respiratory infections, and injuries. Labor and childbirth cases were sent to traditional birth attendants in the villages; no specialized care was available for complications such as post-partum hemorrhage (ibid; 26), much less any other gender-specific health needs. Access to healthcare outside of Pibor town varied, but was generally minimal, and essentially nonexistent outside of administrative centres.

A livelihoods assessment carried out nationwide by the World Food Program and other agencies in 2012 found a dire situation in Pibor County, with approximately 65,000 people – out of the total county population of approx. 165,000 – severely or moderately food insecure (WFP *et al.*, 2013). It is unclear whether any interventions resulted from the assessment. A male respondent mentioned nutrition programs being carried out in Likuangole (26), and the IRNA mission in early 2014 noted that there had previously been nutrition interventions carried out in Pibor town until staff left due to violence, though it did not provide any information regarding the previous interventions.

### 3.3 Education

Many respondents commented on the importance of education for themselves and their children, and indeed we heard several stories of unique and tenacious pursuit of education (15, 24, 57). One male respondent optimistically told us “the first thing to change people is the school; if everybody would be educated, what would be our problems?” and blamed Murle people's lack of education for constraining their ability to participate in politics and gain adequate representation at the national level (24). Other respondents expressed the belief that education was key to gaining access to employment opportunities, though the nature of education – essentially, whether it had been in the Arabic system or provided English instruction – also mattered significantly (51, 55). We also heard a strong sense that the government should provide access to education, with minimal fees (3, 24, 41, 42, 43, 55).

Given that people displaced to Juba were more likely to have come from Pibor and other towns, they were perhaps more likely to prioritize education and to have sent their children to school than households in rural areas (15, 42, 51). School enrollment across South Sudan is not high – the national net enrollment rate (NER)<sup>8</sup> was only 44 percent in 2013; secondary school enrollment in the same period was a miniscule 1.6 percent (UN-OCHA, 2013). Rates were similarly low in Jonglei, and particularly in Pibor, with its remoteness and isolated, mobile population. In Jonglei as a whole, the NER was 48 percent in 2009 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), and Pibor County lagged far behind, with a NER of only 12 percent, or 5,472 children (3,794 boys and 1,678 girls) enrolled in primary school (NBS, 2010).

Boys' education was much more likely to be prioritized than girls' (42). This gender gap is not surprising, and is born out in statistics regarding literacy and school enrollment nationwide: girls' enrollment was at only 27 percent (Kircher, 2013) and “girls face extreme difficulty entering and staying in school” (UN-

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.msf.org/article243/south-sudan-120000-people-pibor-county-cut-aid>

<sup>8</sup> Net enrollment rate refers to the share of children of primary school age that are actually enrolled in primary school. In the case of South Sudan, this age group consists of 6- to 13-year-olds, i.e. 12 percent of all children 6-13 years of age in Pibor County were enrolled in school.

OCHA, 2012; 16). Female literacy rates nationwide are extremely low: a mere 13 percent of girls and women between the ages of 15 and 24, and 19 percent of women overall, are able to read (ibid.).

The availability of primary schools in Pibor County was clearly concentrated in population centres, particularly Pibor town as well as Boma and Likuangole (1, 26, 31, 36). Families in Pibor town reportedly paid between 15 and 30 South Sudanese Pounds<sup>9</sup> in school fees per student each term (9, 22, 44). The quality of both the facilities and instruction is unknown; one male respondent stated that the government school building in Pibor town dated back to the Sudanese (pre-CPA) era, and that the government had not built anything new in the area, despite assurances following the CPA and independence (3b). Another woman expressed that “[w]e are just seeing that children go to school. We do not know the quality” (22). Consistency was almost certainly an issue: education has been disrupted by insecurity multiple times in recent years, and in many cases children had stopped attending even before the mass displacement of 2013 (3b). At least some of the school buildings were destroyed in fighting with the SPLA and Lou Nuer on various occasions (55, 56).

We also heard about exceptional cases in which people had gone far, whether from home or simply outside the local norm, to pursue education. Several students from the church school in Boma town had been supported to attend a secondary school in Eastern Equatoria State or across the border in Kitale, Kenya in recent years (36a, 36b). Several others told us about forging a path toward their own education despite being far beyond primary school age. One man, who was over 40 years old, described leaving his cattle and moving to Pibor town in order to pursue his education because he had seen educated people and believed them to live a “more healthy and comfortable life” (24). Another man had left the cattle camp and moved closer to town with few heads of cattle so that he could care for them as well as attend school, though “all [of the cattle] has gone” by the time he came to Juba (57). In Juba he was involved in organizing and teaching a school for IDP children, which is further discussed in the Annex.

### **3.4 Roads and transportation**

Pibor County is one of the most, if not *the* most, isolated areas in all of South Sudan, with almost no roads other than one track that connects Bor with Pibor town. The entire county, even Pibor town, is essentially cut off from the rest of the country during the entire rainy season (1b, 43). Several respondents proposed roadbuilding as a key to building peace in Pibor County, because “roads connect people” and improve access to services (3, 17, 20, 24). Another noted that the former governor of Jonglei promised that a road would be built in 2009, yet nothing had happened (48). There is lingering resentment about such unkept promises; people remember them, and this has implications for governance and security, which are further discussed elsewhere in this paper.

### **3.5 Communications**

There is little to no communications infrastructure in Pibor County. While official statistics from 2010 (the most recent year available) report two mobile phone towers in Pibor County (more than existed in seven of the ten counties in Jonglei at that time) (NBS, 2010), it is common for towers to be non-functioning, as they are dependent upon fuel and other supplies and maintenance that are often lacking. A Human Rights Watch report in 2009 noted that communications in Pibor County were severely limited, posing problems for the investigation of fighting and other events taking place there (HRW, 2009). Such challenges certainly also pose severe challenges to daily life for civilians who wish to communicate among households and extended relations. It is a constraint for those who need to reach people who have been displaced by insecurity over recent years. Several respondents noted that they have lost track of family members and do not know the situation of relatives living in the bush – either because they had moved there with cattle or fled because of fighting – for lack of phone network in the county (3, 39, 52).

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<sup>9</sup> As of June 2014, the exchange rate was 3.1SSP to 1USD (<http://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.aspx>)

### 3.6 Humanitarian assistance

The provision of social protection is minimal to nonexistent in South Sudan overall and particularly in Jonglei. As we found in northern Jonglei in early 2013, assistance – such as it is – is very much focused on emergency relief, and generally comes from international organizations, or in some cases from or through local churches. In northern Jonglei we heard about emergency relief delivered by the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) in conjunction with NGOs, minimal though it was. Pibor County IDPs, however, only noted the absence of any relief from the GRSS (1b, 2, 10, 16, 20). Respondents described receiving food aid, tents, and medicine from humanitarian agencies (2, 20, 21).

Some aid was delivered in Pibor town, including food aid by the World Food Programme (WFP) (2), but the provision of emergency relief and aid in Pibor town was reportedly problematic, as access was controlled by the SPLA, and some people who had fled town to hide in the bush following violence in 2012 and 2013 were targeted when they returned to town to seek aid (2, 32). A female respondent said, however, that “some changes happened” and people had eventually been able to enter town to access food aid and other relief (2). That said, a male respondent noted that only women had been able to enter town, at least for a period, because it was too dangerous for men to go near the SPLA (1). Given reports of women being targets of physical and sexual violence by the SPLA and others (7; HRW, 2013) it does not appear that women were safe either, but they were apparently able to be more mobile with less fear for their lives than men had.

### 3.7 Service delivery and conflict

Many respondents noted the lack of peace in Jonglei State and specifically Pibor County as a major barrier to development and access to services (16, 44, 48). According to a male Murle GRSS official, “Service delivery needs peace. “How can you deliver services at the moment when people are fighting?” He underlined that “The first thing is peace. After peace we can advise. We see what will follow the peace” (16). Others noted that, even prior to displacement, conflict had disrupted or completely halted their access to services, as health services were targeted and schools closed due to insecurity, particularly around Pibor town (3, 13, 48, 53, 55, 56, 57). One agency staff person said that there had been efforts by the County Commissioner, with local government and development partners, to reach people with some emergency food and other assistance amidst violence in Pibor, but that such efforts had backfired in incidents where people who came to towns to access assistance had been exposed to further violence, including some being shot at by the SPLA, and several women raped (13).

We found a surprising amount of forgiveness and patience among Lou Nuer respondents in northern Jonglei in early 2013 regarding the inability of GRSS to provide services due to its relative infancy and lack of resources (Maxwell et al., 2014). Importantly, such patience generally did not extend to the lack of services *overall*, about which there was still great frustration, but rather distinguished between perceptions of what the government was or should be able to provide and what gaps should be filled in by other providers (i.e. international agencies) in the meantime. At the same time, there remained quite a few people who described believing quite strongly in the “marginalization” of Nuer communities at the hands of non-Nuer (mainly Dinka) politicians in Juba and Bor (ibid.). (The extent to which such perceptions gave rise to the current civil war is far beyond the scope of this paper, but is worthy of future excavation and analysis.)

We heard no such compassion for any perceived constraints on government or other actors, but similar narratives of marginalization, from Murle IDPs. Several respondents mentioned unfulfilled promises and discrimination by GRSS, which they believed contributed greatly to the difficult circumstances faced by Murle in Pibor County as well as in Juba (1, 2, 15, 48). Several respondents told us that the government was purposefully ignoring the challenges in Pibor County, because “maybe they do not want [the Murle]” (15) and “they want to chase us away” (2). A female respondent wondered aloud whether “if you have a leader and he is not coming when you are suffering, do you have a leader?” (15). This perception among the Murle that GRSS has written them off, and indiscriminately blamed them for violence in Jonglei, has driven some Murle *toward* violence from which they were otherwise trying to disassociate themselves and avoid (33; Felix da Costa, 2013; Gordon, 2014). The promise of independence centered on the improvement of lives and livelihoods of the South Sudanese, and fundamental to such

improvement is widespread access to basic services. The difficulties of delivering on that promise manifest the paradox of statebuilding in conflict-affected areas: stability is both a necessary precursor and the desired outcome. This tautology is not easily overcome: roads construction requires effective security, yet it is very difficult for security services to operate and move effectively without roads. The construction of schools, clinics, and other locations of service delivery is, likewise, dependent upon both of those precursors.

Of course, development is not guaranteed to follow peace in Pibor County, just as promised development did not immediately follow the signing of the CPA in 2005 or independence in 2011. And the perceived slowness of progress may well have been a factor in instability up to and including the current civil war. An OECD-commissioned multi-donor evaluation in 2010 found that there was “a need to precede and follow up disarmament with development inputs in order to encourage cooperation” all over the country, and that some of the people interviewed for the evaluation noted that guarantees of services and assistance in return for cooperation in disarmament had gone unfulfilled (Bennett *et al.*, 2010). The appearance of empty promises, compounded by the violent manner in which disarmament processes have been carried out in Pibor County (see the Conflict section below for further discussion), matters all the more given the multiple rounds of disarmament that have taken place in South Sudan, particularly in places like Pibor County. It is also likely that there will be a need for similar – and probably more complicated and even less welcome – disarmament efforts following the end of current hostilities, whenever that may come. If the “rewards” offered for disarmament are doubted from the outset, or go undelivered, then the whole process will likely fail yet again, and the gap between promised and actual stability will only continue to grow.

### **Box 2: International engagement service provision in Pibor County**

The presence of the “international community” in Pibor County is relatively minimal, with the exception of the service delivery noted above. In the NGO sphere, perhaps the most active organization is MSF, which has operated medical facilities and also actively documented the violence taking place over the past several years (MSF, 2012). Despite the fact that MSF facilities have been targeted and destroyed on numerous occasions (MSF, 2012; HRW, 2013), they have continued to rebuild and offer services, including having an active presence in three communities in Pibor County (Pibor town, Gumuruk, and Dorein) at the time of this writing.

Other NGOs have had a presence at times, though many left in 2012-2013 as the violence between the SPLA and Yau Yau’s forces heightened insecurity. In September 2012, [IRIN reported](#) that only two international agencies maintained a presence in Pibor town and only a few were operating in the entire county because of insecurity. PLAN International was operating in Pibor town until May 2013, at which point it [ceased operations due to insecurity](#). They were certainly not alone, nor was the security threat unclear: a Yau Yau statement in May 2013 warned civilians and NGOs to leave Pibor town immediately.

To a much larger extent, the international presence in Pibor County has been under the flag of UNMISS, which has bases in Pibor and Gumuruk towns as well as occasional presence elsewhere in the county. Much of that presence has been peacekeeping forces, though their numbers have remained small and – according to many – has always lacked the resources, capacity and mandate for peacekeeping to be successful (Rands and LeRiche, 2012; HRW, 2013). Other UNMISS activities in Pibor have revolved around humanitarian assessment and food distribution (WFP, 2013). The World Food Programme (WFP) [distributed food in Pibor town](#) as well as other communities in July 2013.

UNMISS plays a significant coordination role among agencies, such as that described above of WFP with the humanitarian cluster. The logistics cluster coordinated the delivery of food and relief supplies for a number of NGOs including Kissito International, Intersos, PAH, CRS, MedAir, ICRC, MSF-B, IOM, and WFP in July 2013 (WFP, 2013).

Other than such emergency relief, we were told by a WFP official, WFP's activities in Pibor focus on working with the humanitarian cluster system in an advisory role; the official also said that internal discussions were underway at that time (November 2013) to determine how to move forward with resilience-building activities following the cessation of hostilities between Yau Yau's forces and the SPLA (32). Despite the fact that such an agreement has been reached, the larger national political and humanitarian crisis now preclude anything other than emergency response for the foreseeable future.

UNMISS have also been criticized on a number of occasions for problems ranging from being too slow to respond to clear notice of impending attack by Lou Nuer fighters on Pibor County (Rands and LeRiche, 2012) to incomplete and biased reporting of crimes and human rights violations (McCallum, 2013). While in many cases, UNMISS reports have been the only or one of the few sources of information on what is happening on the ground in Pibor County (and elsewhere in Jonglei), their accuracy has been questioned, as in the case of reports about disarmament in Pibor County that failed to mention the use of torture and other serious concerns until independent observers from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reported them, forcing UNMISS' hand (ibid.).

While observers have criticized this tendency to put a positive spin on events even when there is strong evidence to the contrary, they also acknowledge that UNMISS is in a very challenging position, as it cannot operate without the permission and support of GRSS. The potential for negative outcomes was made extremely clear in December 2012, when an UNMISS helicopter was shot down by the SPLA, which believed it to be an enemy plane delivering supplies to Yau Yau's rebel forces; [all four Russian crew on board were killed](#).

### 3.8 Summary

Pibor County has been, and remains, one of the most under-developed areas of South Sudan. Access to services is minimal, and essentially nonexistent outside of Pibor town and a few other population centres, which had schools and health facilities. Most of those facilities were operated by NGOs; respondents noted that the presence of the government in terms of service delivery throughout the county was negligible. At the same time, many respondents described services in a positive light, most likely because our population sample was largely from Pibor town and other relatively better-resourced areas. Much of the infrastructure for service delivery, such as school buildings and healthcare facilities, was deliberately targeted and destroyed in the violence of 2012 and 2013.

In contrast to our research in northern Jonglei, we did not hear any forgiveness of the government for the lack of development in the county. Instead, many people blamed GRSS for what they thought was purposeful neglect of Pibor County infrastructure and services, believing that politics and marginalization lay at the root of these and other problems, including the violence that displaced them to Juba.

## 4 Conflict

The long history and complexity of conflict in Jonglei, and particularly in Pibor, cannot be overstated. Conflict devastated Pibor County in mid-2013; violence against civilians was committed both by SPLA soldiers and Lou Nuer fighters in an intertwining of conflicts that resulted in hundreds dead, including women and children, and nearly the entire population of Pibor County displaced (HRW, 2013), including most of the IDPs we met in Juba. The events of 2013 were, however, simply the most recent in a long line of clashes in Pibor County and involving the Murle (both in fact and in rumor) dating back long before independence (and displacing some others with whom we spoke in Juba, who had fled Pibor County prior to mid-2013 due to similar violence). As a Human Rights Watch report pointed out after the most recent round of clashes, which displaced so many Murle civilians to Juba and elsewhere, violence between Jonglei's ethnic groups has resulted in thousands of deaths in recent years, with little intervention from the GRSS or other actors to prevent or stop it (HRW, 2013). Unlike in "traditional" inter-group conflict in South Sudan, women, children and the elderly have been particularly targeted in recent violence; women were described in interviews as particularly vulnerable, both to sexual violence (7, 35) and, as one female IDP said, because men had lost their power to protect the community, and then "women suffer most, as their children need to eat" (2).

The SLRC South Sudan team produced an analysis of conflict in Jonglei in early 2014 that explores conflict statewide in depth (Gordon, 2014). The present document therefore does not go into great detail about broader conflict history and dynamics, but will focus on the respondent perspectives gathered through interviews with Murle IDPs in November 2013. They painted a picture coherent with our broader analysis of the conflict, and similarly complex. Respondents identified a number of dynamics contributing to conflict in and displacement from Pibor County, including the following issues:

- David Yau Yau's rebel movement, known as the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army (SSDM/A) – Cobra Faction, and its conflict with the GRSS between 2010 and 2013, and GRSS violence against Murle civilians, intertwined with its efforts to fight the SSDM/A—Cobra Faction (Yau Yau)
- Internal Murle community dynamics, including competition for dominance between age-sets, as well as conflict between different Murle groups
- Inter-ethnic violence between Murle, Lou Nuer, Dinka, and other groups in Jonglei
- Frustration with GRSS action and inaction in Pibor County, including disarmament efforts, and perceptions of marginalization due to the slow pace of development and other factors

Several Murle chiefs listed their issues more simply: "First, solve the conflict with Yau Yau; second, solve the cattle rustling between Murle, Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor; and third, create a new state in Pibor for the Murle. Jonglei is too big, and services are not getting to people in Pibor. Division will lead to effective governance" (1). The last point is similar to Yau Yau's stated cause, and is in fact similar to the solution inked in a peace agreement between Yau Yau and the GRSS in May 2014. The agreement, brokered by South Sudanese religious leaders, formally ended the four-year rebellion, and creates a new geographic and administrative entity called the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), encompassing the current Pibor and Pochalla Counties, pending the adoption of a new national Constitution which will solidify the area's political status. The GPAA will have an administrator with status equal to that of state governors, to be nominated by Yau Yau's Cobra Faction and confirmed by and reporting to the President of South Sudan.<sup>10</sup> It remains unclear at the time of this writing, however, how the peace agreement will be implemented.

That is not to say, however, that the creation of new administrative areas or resolution of any conflicts or raiding is simple in the least, or that other issues and animosities will fade once those administrative details are worked out, as other respondents noted in interviews as well. Indeed, the Jie, Anyuak, and

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<sup>10</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/201403290092.html>; <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/15283/Jie-Community-Distances-Self-From-Government-Yau-Yau-Deal.aspx>

Kachipo communities whose territory would form part of the GPAA have more recently issued statements applauding the settlement of conflict but stating their opposition to being part of the GPAA. This section discusses respondents' views on the various aspects of conflict that have impacted Pibor County in recent years.

#### 4.1 David Yau Yau and the SSDM/A–Cobra Faction vs. GRSS

The armed movement of David Yau Yau and his SSDM/A–Cobra Faction (referred to henceforth as “Yau Yau,” as both respondents and observers very much identify the group with the man), is blamed for much of the violence that has raged in Jonglei on and off since Yau Yau's failed bid for state assembly (representing Gumuruk) in 2010. One woman stated that Yau Yau's hostility was aimed at the Jonglei state government, rather than the GRSS as a whole, but that officials in Bor had brought in political and military forces from Juba in order to complicate matters (2). Others concurred that politics seemed to be poisoning rather than clarifying the issues, because of distrust and discrimination from the Jonglei state government (7) – which had, in their account, sidelined the Pibor County Commissioner and silenced Murle political leadership at the state level (2, 13, 16). Historical distrust may also play a role, according to a chief who noted that many of South Sudan's major rebellions began in Jonglei, perhaps causing the government to view everyone there with deep suspicion (1b).

Overall, respondents described a complex and perhaps contradictory situation in which support for Yau Yau's armed rebellion had waned, but many respondents' grievances against GRSS were very similar to a number of Yau Yau's demands and reasons underlying rebellion (2, 6, 7, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 28, 31, 33, 35a, 36a, 48, 49, 53). Those reasons, according to some interviewees, included violent disarmament (2, 13, 14, 31, 33, 48), and marginalization of the Murle (1b, 24). In particular, some noted, the lack of distinction by the GRSS in either rhetoric or armed action between rebels and civilians actually drove people *toward* Yau Yau in search of protection (14, 33, 49). That said, we were told that Yau Yau also attacked Murle communities and stole cattle from them (12), leading to anger toward the rebellion and decreasing support. Further details on these intra-community aspects of the rebellion are not easy to come by, as the situation has been little reported or studied, and is poorly understood.

There is also a belief that “there are some people [in GRSS] who do not want peace” (24) with Yau Yau or in Pibor County generally because they have their own animosities and agendas (2, 13, 22, 24). Some said that the government gave them nothing and allowed or perpetrated violence against civilians in Pibor County because, according to one woman, “they want us to die” (2). Others said that “We have been running away [because of the government]. We are even displaced by the government, through the SPLA” (22). A man from Pibor town believed that some of the violence that took place there against civilians resulted from anger and frustration on the part of the SPLA that they had been unsuccessful in defeating Yau Yau: “When they [SPLA] were defeated in the bush they came back to kill us” and hoped that all involved would “Let peace come. If the government does not make peace we will suffer here” (23).

Regardless of the reasons for conflict, we heard general weariness with the fighting and simple desire to return home, for which peace between Yau Yau and the GRSS would be the necessary precursor. “Many Murle think that the rebellion gave them nothing,” according to an expat who works for an NGO in Juba, who said that “people are stuck” between violence against civilians in towns and the remote areas of the bush where people fled for safety but then were barred from leaving by Yau Yau's forces (13). Others said that it was the responsibility of Yau Yau and the government to make peace (3, 5, 23, 24, 56), and that they must do so because “Murle are dying” (23).

As has been discussed elsewhere (see Gordon, 2014 and Small Arms Survey, 2014), Yau Yau signed a ceasefire deal with the GRSS in January 2014 and a subsequent peace agreement in March 2014, bringing the conflict to at least a temporary halt. Previous peace agreements between Yau Yau and GRSS have proven too fragile for survival in the past; the prospects of the present agreement within the broader context of conflict in South Sudan at the time of this writing are unknown.

## 4.2 Conflict between Murle, Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor

Also intertwined with violence committed by the SPLA and Yau Yau is inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflict related to cycles of violence and revenge which have long been at work in Jonglei, but more recently spiraled out of control due to the proliferation of weapons, lack of restraining institutions, and other compounding factors (3, 17, 35; see also Gordon, 2014 for greater detail on these dynamics). One of the largest factors in the mass displacement from Jonglei in mid-2013 was not the violence between the SPLA and Yau Yau, but a massive attack on Murle communities carried out by mostly Lou Nuer fighters from northern Jonglei; thousands of young fighters marched on Pibor County, killing an untold number of civilians and displacing nearly the entire population (1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 19, 21, 25, 33, 37, 39, 47, 48; HRW, 2013).<sup>11</sup> This was not the first such large-scale attack by Nuer fighters on the Murle; similar attacks in March 2009, April-June 2011, and December 2012 involved thousands of attackers and resulted in hundreds dead (Felix da Costa, 2013; HRW, 2013; Gordon, 2014). Respondents also described numerous abductions of women and children (1, 26, 31, 35, 48, 56) as well as tremendous destruction of property and infrastructure (17, 35, 55).<sup>12</sup> Some respondents reported that the Lou Nuer attacks were concurrent, if not coordinated, with attacks by the SPLA (39), forcing them to flee toward wherever there seemed to be a possibility of escape – hence, boarding planes to Juba – because they had nowhere else to go. Human Rights Watch noted that the concurrence of ethnic, rebel, and state violence in July 2013 meant that “Murle, displaced by the conflict and by SPLA abuses, may have been especially vulnerable to the attack” of Lou Nuer fighters (HRW, 2013: 2).

Contrary to popular belief, Murle respondents said that some Dinka were also involved in the attacks on their territory (1b, 7, 12, 41, 48). In some cases, people seemed to hold the Dinka accountable for violence in Pibor County even where they said it had been committed by Lou Nuer: “Dinka Bor displaced us. Dinka mobilized Lou Nuer to attack Murle” (7, 19, 35), though a young woman from Gumuruk said that the conflict was limited to the Murle and Lou Nuer, and that the Murle had no problems with their Anyuak or Dinka neighbors (37). Several noted that they know that popular belief throughout much of the country places responsibility for violence in Jonglei on Murle shoulders (2, 17, 22). Thus Murle are not seen as victims but as perpetrators of violence. One woman described stereotypes of Murle held by others in South Sudan, that “Murle are criminals, [they] steal children. They are primitive and illiterate” (2), and another woman attributed violence to a pervasive view that Murle are “inferior” (22). They and others stated their belief that these impressions have led not only to violence but the overall lack of development in Pibor County (1b, 2, 17, 22, 24, 48). Indeed, government and media statements have corroborated these impressions of negative stereotyping of the Murle (Laudati, 2011; Jok, 2013, Gordon, 2014).

## 4.3 Disarmament and peacebuilding

Many respondents said they desired peace (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 31, 33, 35, 36a, 44, 48, 53, 56), particularly between the GRSS and Yau Yau, and many said they were following and supporting peace talks being led by the New Sudan Council of Churches and retired Bishop Taban (1b, 5, 35b, 48, 49), himself a UN peace prize winner<sup>13</sup> credited with significant progress in building positive relations between ethnic groups traditionally in conflict (Carney, 2010). A Murle peace committee made up of five senior officials was advising the GRSS and presidential delegation in peace talks with Yau Yau, though not directly participating themselves; their activities were supported financially and logistically by the UN, according to a member of the committee (17). Other respondents reported that they had peace-related meetings and committees within their own communities, even while in Juba (28, 33, 38), though others said that ultimately peace depended on the government and rebels, and that regular civilians could not influence the process (23). Several women noted that women are not expected or invited to participate in meetings and community decision making (25, 31, 36a, 38, 39, 52).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/report/98474/briefing-why-the-violence-in-south-sudan-s-jonglei-state>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/south-sudan-violence-escalates-pibor>; <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article47281>;

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.sergiovdmfoundation.org/wcms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=146&Itemid=209&lang=en](http://www.sergiovdmfoundation.org/wcms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=146&Itemid=209&lang=en)

Respondents also had ready suggestions for those charged with peace negotiations. Among them were some beliefs that the population should be disarmed (19, 56) but only if carried out respectfully and nonviolently, perhaps through chiefs and other local authorities (56). Interviewees said that previous disarmament efforts had not only been ineffective (15), leading to a proliferation of the use of weapons for cattle raiding and all kinds of other disputes that only intensified insecurity for the Murle as well as their neighbors (17), but had been carried out brutally, with terrible treatment of civilians including the beating and killing of children and raping of women (2, 14, 31, 33, 48). As noted previously, disarmament was cited as a reason many people joined Yau Yau's forces, either out of anger or fear toward the SPLA. The violence of previous disarmament efforts in Pibor County has been documented elsewhere (Gordon 2014; Rands and LeRiche, 2012; Felix da Costa, 2013; HRW, 2013). That said, there is no doubt that the enormous supply and minimal regulation of small arms in Jonglei and across South Sudan is a major contributing factor to ongoing conflict (Small Arms Survey, 2013; Gordon 2014).

Other suggestions for peace building included the necessity of making peace with the Murle's neighbors, mainly the Dinka Bor and Lou Nuer (1, 2, 3, 49, 56). There was a different peace process in place to direct those efforts – the Presidential Committee for Community Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance in Jonglei State, headed by Archbishop Daniel Deng, formed by Presidential Order in early 2012 (CDI, 2012), though the work of that committee was not mentioned in interviews. One man said that chiefs should be tasked with resolving conflict between the Murle and their neighbors (35), though this is a problematic suggestion given the relatively little authority of chiefs among the Murle, as will be discussed further below. Other respondents suggested that employment and other livelihoods alternatives to cattle-keeping would be key to peacebuilding; an NGO staffer said that young men (of any ethnic group, not just Murle) who “taste money” through employment are more inclined to pursue a stable life style in which they “roam around” less (13). Many suggested that services – particularly roads, education and healthcare – would be key to the creation and sustenance of lasting peace (1, 17, 43, 44, 48).

An agency staff person in Juba, taking a broader view, noted that the sense of marginalization in Jonglei pervades many communities' views of one another and the government. “Nuer feel left out. Dinka feel not protected by the government. Murle feel attacked by the SPLA. Kachipo and Jie feel marginalized. Anyuak feel targeted by the Ethiopian Government and also under land pressure in South Sudan” (49). He noted tensions between other ethnic groups in Jonglei, including Lou Nuer and Anyuak strife that had recently resulted in the death of an Anyuak paramount chief in Akobo County.<sup>14</sup> Our own SLRC research found reports of conflict from Lou Nuer respondents in northern Jonglei overwhelmingly pointing fingers at the Murle – hence our research focusing on Pibor County – but also noting hostilities with other groups over the past few years including inter-clan fighting between Lou and Jikany Nuer as well as clashes between Nuer and Dinka (Maxwell et al., 2014). Of course, it is this Dinka-Nuer conflict that is now so widely seen as playing out at the national level, as local animosities have been mobilized by elites in the political power struggle between President Kiir and former Vice President Machar. This is, perhaps, the ultimate illustration of the surprisingly short distance between community-level grievances and the national stage in South Sudan.

#### **4.4 Murle internal dynamics**

Perhaps the most overlooked, yet critical, aspect of conflict in Pibor County is the intra-communal dynamics that define the Murle's acephalous society.<sup>15</sup> As Arensen, one of the few scholars writing on Murle culture, noted at a 2012 Nairobi meeting of NGOs and agencies working in Jonglei, the Murle's lack of hierarchical social structure does not mean there is no authority – as is sometimes assumed – but does have “serious implications when it comes to making political decisions that affect the entire tribe. Since there is ‘no head,’ there are no strong political leaders who have far reaching authority” (Arensen, 2012). This lack of hierarchical leadership impacts all of the above measures aimed at peacemaking, despite interviewees' high hopes for negotiations; even with a peace deal between GRSS and Yau Yau, the other conflict dynamics between the Murle and their neighbors are unlikely to be easily resolved. As noted in our SLRC conflict analysis, the Murle are often faulted for failing to adhere

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article48315>

<sup>15</sup> [Acephalous literally means “headless”. Acephalous societies are said to lack permanent leadership heading the whole society.](#)

to peace agreements, and called upon, as one NGO staff person told us, to have a “unified position” in peace talks (13), yet such expectations may be unrealistic in the context of Murle culture, and therefore unhelpful to conflict resolution efforts (Gordon, 2014). It must be noted that the Dinka and Nuer are also described by scholars as acephalous societies; the term “acephalous” was, in fact, applied to the Nuer in Evans-Pritchard’s famous study (1940) before it was used to describe the Murle. The Dinka and Nuer did, however, more readily adhere to the system of chiefs implemented under British colonial rule than did the Murle, who maintained more allegiance to their age-set system despite adopting the language of ‘chiefs’ and ‘commoners’ (Lewis, 1972; Schomerus and Allen, 2010). This divergence may help explain the differences in social organization between these groups today.

Perhaps a more realistic approach is greater focus on and understanding of other internal dynamics, especially those that have resulted in increased conflict among the Murle in recent years and contributed to poor relations with their neighbors. The Murle age-set system is complex. A group of male youth said that the category of “youth” might be broad, but within it, there were the Lango (18 to 29), Botonya (30 – 37) and Titith (37 to 45) age-sets. Within these age-sets, the males all took part in activities such as clearing roads, protecting the community and cattle against raids, hunting, and supporting their parents and extended households with food (9). The Lango age-set is just now coming up to challenge the authority of the Botonya, resulting in battles among the males of each age-set for dominance and resources that will allow young men to marry and become the designated protectors of the community (9, 30, 33, 39, 49). Felix da Costa (2013) was told by some interviewees in Pibor County, however, that dominance has not yet been completely passed to the Botonya from the Titith (plural) (whom she calls the Titch (sing.)), further complicating Lango efforts to wrest power from the Botonya already. Some respondents described the emergence of new age-sets happening first among the lowland Murle (around Pibor town) and then making its way to Boma, in the highlands (33, 49). A new age-set named the Tagot is, in fact, already emerging in the lowlands of Pibor County (Felix da Costa, 2013), which may further complicate rivalry between the Lango, Botonya and Titith in the next several years. Many respondents described a situation in which the combination of age-set competition, livelihoods constraints particularly affecting young men, and challenges to social organization resulting from years of conflict are taking a severe toll on Murle community stability (1, 6, 13, 14, 17, 30, 33, 35, 49).

Age-set competition is a significant factor in local conflict dynamics, not least because the fighting for dominance that once took place with sticks and spears is now carried out more often with guns (17, 33, 49). It also plays out in attacks on other parts of Jonglei, including in raiding that may be blamed on Yau Yau or other organized non-state armed groups – an attack on Twic East county in 2013 that was attributed to Yau Yau’s forces was as an attack by Murle youth (he did not say which age-set) who no longer supported Yau Yau. Another aspect of such interplay is the poorly-understood role of other powerful figures such as a chief named Baba Majong who reportedly has a significant following and was responsible for the capture of Boma from the SPLA in 2012, though it has been widely attributed to Yau Yau’s forces (49). The inclusion of all of such actors and groups may well be key to the successful outcome of any efforts aimed at stabilizing Pibor County, particularly in the context of (often similarly oversimplified) conflict at the larger national level.

The breakdown in other community authority structures means that social norms which previously may have helped keep inter-age-set violence somewhat in check have broken down, and attacks such as the large raid on Twic East may be more commonplace because “the youth are on their own” as one respondent stated (13). All that said, the age-set system continues to provide at least some stability in times of crisis – one male elder noted that the system has been a crucial part of Murle community survival of displacement in Juba, because it creates a framework in which power and relationships can be mediated effectively (35). People identify with members of their age-set and share resources with them including shelter and food (35).

While the age-set system links Murle across geographical distances, tensions also exist between the “lowland” (Pibor town) and “highland” (Boma) Murle, and have worsened in recent years as other organizing mechanisms have broken down and Yau Yau’s presence has split communities (49; Felix da Costa, 2013). The Boma Murle, being less dependent on cattle, have tried to distance themselves from lowland Murle and the stigmas related to raiding and other cattle-related aspects of conflict in recent years (Felix da Costa, 2013). A new division of Pibor County to create the Boma sub-county in 2013,

with leadership reporting directly to the governor of Jonglei rather than the Pibor County Commissioner, also contributed to increasing tensions; the origins of that decision were unclear, but it was described by an interviewee as a political maneuver by the state government intended to divide the Murle (49). It remains unclear at the time of this writing how that decision and others will translate into the new Greater Pibor Administrative Area created by the 2014 peace agreement between the GRSS and Yau Yau.<sup>16</sup>

## 4.5 Summary

The dynamics of conflict in Pibor County and, indeed, across Jonglei and South Sudan as a whole, are complex and ever-changing. The conflict between David Yau Yau and his Cobra Faction and the SPLA was one of the major elements of violence that spilled over against civilians and led to the massive displacement of Murle that took place in early- and mid-2013. Many respondents reported feeling “trapped” between the two sides, both of which threatened their safety, while at the same time sometimes being driven toward Yau Yau by government rhetoric and actions that failed to distinguish Murle civilians from rebels, and was generally threatening and dismissive of their security concerns.

Cycles of violence and revenge, intertwined with cattle raiding, between the Murle and neighboring groups, primarily the Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor, have long defined inter-community relations, but appear to have worsened in recent years. Respondents characterized this inter-communal violence as another example of their marginalization at the hands of GRSS, particularly the state government in Bor, which many believed to be behind the large-scale attacks on Pibor County by (mainly) Lou Nuer fighters in mid-2013, as well as previous attacks. Those cycles of violence are also related in complex and unclear ways to intra-Murle dynamics, particularly competition between age-sets for dominance and the rights of young men to marry. These dynamics are poorly understood by most observers, and have been little considered within the framework of peace talks between ethnic groups and GRSS-Yau Yau. Yet this failure to respect the fundamental social architecture of Murle society and its differences from other South Sudanese ethnic groups is likely to lead only to ongoing violence.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://upper Nile Times.net/details/684>

## 5 Governance and participation

One of the SLRC programme's focus areas is the anticipated nexus between access to basic services and people's perceptions of governance and the state. As illustrated in the section on services, the few services available in Pibor County - before the escalation of violence of mid-2013 displaced many - had been mainly provided in administrative headquarters settlements. In Juba, access to services was described by Murle IDPs as very challenging. Consequently, provision of services seems not to be the major aspect mediating the relationship between state and society at the local level. Considering that the collected data do not support the idea that services influence people's perceptions of governance, the question arises: what, and/or who, mediates the state-citizen relationship?

Evidence from field research suggests that administrative chiefs, a system of authority introduced by the colonial government which is now strongly intertwined with socio-political structures, play an important role in mediating state-society relations all over South Sudan, though their authority may be more limited among the Murle than in other groups with more centralized structures, as mentioned above. This section discusses the role of chiefs and other local governance actors, and analyses respondents' perceptions of the roles of those actors.

Pibor County - which is now included into the Greater Pibor Administrative area - is composed of four payams; Verteth, Lekuangle, Gumuruk, and Pibor Payams, as well as the new Boma sub-county mentioned above.<sup>17</sup> Before the crisis the county executive and the county administration headed by the commissioner were based in Pibor town (3, 10, 28, 60), as were the county court, led by the paramount chief, and the county legislative assembly (28) along with other administrative, governmental, and international actors. Even before the escalation of armed violence in 2013 government institutions, administrators and political representatives seemed to be disconnected from their populace, particularly from highly mobile community members living in dispersed homesteads and settlements in rural areas of Pibor County (3, 17, 19). A chief stated that local government institutions' activities were not visible at the village level in Pibor County and that there was a need of strengthening the relation between the commissioner, the executive director, the payam administrators and other Murle leaders with the Murle community (3). A senior politician who was based in Juba argued: "There is no [local] government in Jonglei. The government in Jonglei is isolated". Even before the outbreak of violence the commissioner had been mainly based in Pibor town without regular exchange with payam administrators and chiefs who were based in the different payams, the respondent suggested. Consequently, the commissioner had been disconnected from his populace and did not know "what was going on" (17).

### 5.1 Administrative chiefs

With little government presence or accessibility in other settlements and rural areas, administrative chiefs and other "traditional" authorities are major stakeholders in local governance. They discussed challenges affecting their communities and acted as intermediaries between higher levels of government and their people (7, 9, 10, 23, 27). Community members turned to chiefs for advice or to pass information to the government (23). Chiefs also engaged with development partners and NGOs that provide social services (46), and were tasked with settling disputes between individuals, families and different age-sets according to customary law in order to prevent escalating violence (6, 7, 8, 27, 28, 46, 52).<sup>18</sup> Two groups of female respondents underlined that they "are happy with the work of chiefs" because chiefs settle disputes according to customary law (51, 52). Chiefs settle different kinds of communal conflicts including disputes over cattle ownership, bride wealth payment and marriage disputes and conflicts between age-sets (28, 52). The paramount chief furthermore solves divorce and homicide (6). Yet, chiefs in Pibor county and in other areas in South Sudan face serious challenges in

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<sup>17</sup> The following paragraphs refer to Pibor County the administrative unit that existed at the time of the interviews.

<sup>18</sup> In case elders and more junior chiefs were not able to settle disputes, they referred them to higher level chiefs (27, 57). The highest level chief - the paramount chief in Pibor town - settled even divorces and homicide cases (6). The settling of homicide cases contradicts the local government act and other legislations. (28). Other County courts are in often headed by judges with a law degree.

settling large scale inter-communal conflicts. As David Deng noted “Homicides perpetrated across ethnic lines are among the most intractable issues that confront local justice systems, particularly when they occur in the context of large-scale violence” (Deng, 2013; 37). In contrast to chiefs from other areas of South Sudan, those in Pibor County apparently did not collect any taxes in recent years (6, 7), though reportedly up to 2000 people had to pay 20 SSP to the government in Pibor town as a poll tax (12).

According to current South Sudan legislation, administrative practices and some respondents’ views, chiefs are seen as part of the local government in Pibor County. Respondents argued that chiefs are part of the government “because he has a boma and because he works with the government” (28) and carries out government-mandated activities (25). At the same time chiefs differ from government administrators in a number of aspects. Chiefs are elected by community members whereas administrators are hired by the state administration. Chiefs work in their area of origin while administrators are transferred to different areas (51, 52).

Some respondents including chiefs noted that Murle administrative chiefs feature a hierarchical structure, though we found this to be more idealized than practiced in reality, according to respondents’ descriptions of local authorities. This “imagined” hierarchical structure is headed by one Murle paramount chief the *nasir* who is responsible for all Murle as their most senior chief (1, 3, 6, 52), followed by head chiefs in each *payam*, called *homda* (3, 6). At the lower (*boma* and village) levels, there exist other types of chiefs such as *boma* chiefs, their deputies, assistants and messengers. Chiefs were described by some respondents as important decision-makers and wielders of considerable influence in the village (27, 52). Others told us that the influence of Murle chiefs vis-à-vis government officials and administrators and also with community members in particular the youth is limited and it is often contested (16, 28). It is the chiefs’ personality, capacity to speak and to fulfill the expectations of their populace more than their title that influences their authority (6, 52).

## 5.2 Authority, governance and societal organization

Given the remoteness and the relative isolation of rural areas of Pibor County, administrative chiefs and other forms of authorities such as red chiefs, age-set leaders, and elders substantially shape governance and authority at the local level. Important socio-political structures in Murle communities are clans and age-sets. Murle clans are divided into two groups: the clans of “red chiefs” also called *alan ci merii* and the clans of “black commoners.” The red chiefs are members of royal lineages that are associated with drumships (57; Arensen, 2012). Red chiefs wield spiritual powers and make offerings but they are not seen as political leaders (49; McCallum, 2012). Furthermore, red chiefs and their families are said to control the Murle land (49). Yet, their influence has been declining gradually according to Arensen (2012). Red chiefs are respected and they similarly to government chiefs engage in the settlement of disputes (57). Some red chiefs are at the same time administrative chiefs. Accordingly, the fields of engagement of administrative chiefs and red chiefs overlap to some degree. In practice it seems at least in some areas difficult to distinguish between administrative chiefs and red chiefs and the line between administrative chiefs and red chiefs is blurred.

Age as a societal category is important in Murle communities for both men and women. Age-sets constitute “the cohesive factor that holds Murle society together” (Arensen, 2012; 2). Affiliation to age-sets determines socio-economic activities, status as well as political influence. Age-sets that were mentioned by respondents were Lango (the most recently introduced age-set), Botonya, Titith, Mwoten, Boronja and Mara (9, 49, 51). It is commonly the male and female members of more senior age-sets - living in semi-permanent and permanent settlements - who strongly engage in local governance issues, discuss communal problems, advise community members and settle disputes (9, 27, 30, 39, 51, 52, 57). The community and political leaders whom we met in Juba were mostly members of more senior age-sets. Yet, the seniority and authority of elders and age-set leaders has its limitations; younger age-sets at times follow elders’ advice and sometimes do not (8, 28). Furthermore, the relationship between different, and particularly between successive age-sets is often competitive, and sometimes violent, as described above in the Conflict section. In urban contexts such as Khartoum age-sets were not considered as being important. Two female respondents who grew up and went to school in Khartoum explained that in Khartoum they had not been part of an age-set. Only when they returned to Pibor town they were included into an age-set (51).

### 5.3 Governance in Pibor County during the crisis

During the armed conflict, civilians fled most payam headquarters as well as Pibor town (2, 7, 10, 21, 28, 57). Respondents noted that it was in most cases only SPLA soldiers who stay in these locations (21, 60). Community members were divided and many separated from their chiefs and other local authorities. One elder said “our community feels like a lost sheep, with no shepherd to watch over us. Many chiefs were killed” (1). The armed conflict disrupted social structures (1, 9, 28), and the local administration collapsed. When we conducted interviews in November 2013, some administrators had returned to their payam headquarters (10, 15); nevertheless, the administration and local government institutions lacked staff as well as people to govern, since most Murle remained where they had fled either outside of the county or in the bush.

The Pibor County Commissioner appeared to occupy a particularly challenging position vis-à-vis the armed conflict in his county. Some Murle respondents believed that the commissioner was aligned with the government and SPLA during the crisis, and they associated him with SPLA atrocities against Murle civilians (53, 57). Senior politicians criticized the commissioner for being disconnected from anyone outside of Pibor town (16, 17): “He should be in contact with chiefs but he is there [in Pibor town] just alone. He should talk to the people in the bush” (16). Other respondents, however, underlined that the commissioners’ situation was challenging (2, 13). The commissioner had been present in Pibor town during the clashes, but he could not prevent atrocities because “people [SPLA] do not listen to him. He was seen as a Murle” a female respondent stated (2). An expatriate respondent noted that the Commissioner “is perceived [by state government] as an agent of Yau Yau” and that his movements throughout the county were severely restricted, so “[h]e is in a difficult position” (13). Accordingly, the armed conflicts that affected Pibor County in 2012 and 2013 seriously impacted the already limited influence and capacity of local government institutions (1, 9, 28). It displaced administrators, officials, chiefs and many community members and completely disrupted the exchange between large sections of the populace and their chiefs and administrators.

### 5.4 Access to information and participation

This study also explores the hypothesis that the relationship between states and citizens in post-conflict societies is to some extent mediated by the access to information and participation. Views differed about the level of access to information, consultation and participation in Pibor County. Some respondents argued that community members were consulted by local authorities and that the public could participate and access the administration as needed, though their views might not penetrate very far or produce much government action (23, 28, 60). A male interviewee said that Murle community members can share their critical views and can “tell [the local government] what is not good” in public meetings (28). He noted that meetings take place when “there is a sudden situation” (28). Other respondents, however, suggested that neither chiefs nor government officials consult Murle community members (25, 30). A female respondent argued that community members in general are only informed, not consulted (25). Other respondents stressed that it is mainly the chiefs, elders and payam administrators who discuss matters together and community members are not involved (7, 10, 27, 30).

Other examples of participation mentioned by respondents were the chiefly elections in 2012 and the election of the county legislative council members in 2011 (33), though the council was mentioned only by one respondent who is himself a member. We were also told of payam meetings that were conducted in Juba in November 2013 around the time that the SLRC team conducted the field study. Murle IDPs and other Murle living in Juba came together with Murle leaders to discuss the peace negotiations between Yau Yau and the government (28, 33); a male respondent who attended a meeting said that the discussion focused on raising awareness of the need for peace (33). Female respondents said that only men go to such meetings and that their husbands had not informed them about the meeting (38, 44).

Access to information, political participation and the involvement of women, particularly younger women, in community decision-making processes is limited in Murle communities (25, 31, 36a, 38, 39, 52). A number of female respondents - even educated women - said that they knew little and had no opinions about the work of administrators and chiefs (25, 51), though we found this to be untrue in

some cases after further inquiries, and probably based in men's expectations of women's lack of involvement in political affairs. Access to information and participation is not only shaped by gender but also by age. Some women belonging to more senior age-sets were said to be organized in women's groups that wield authority, participate in community decision-making processes, and engage with chiefs (31, 51, 52).<sup>19</sup> Young female respondents noted: "If there is an issue, a problem only the members of the women's group, the elder women meet. They do not consider young women" (51). Other young women noted that they do not engage and communicate with chiefs. It is the elder women who discuss with chiefs and "they do not tell young women what they discuss" (52). In chief courts women are not represented. Yet, in recent years the commissioner of Pibor County appointed a female court member into the town court (Deng 2012).

In reference to the GRSS at the state and national levels, Murle respondents felt that they were not well-represented and that they had little or no influence (20, 24, 48, 56, 57). They were convinced that their own leaders are powerless and unable to shape the decisions of the government at the state and national levels (36a, 57). One respondent argued that "nothing has been done by the government" in Pibor County since the CPA in 2005, and that Murle needed more MPs and Ministers to improve the situation in Pibor County (24). Another respondent argued that "in South Sudan, there is always a slogan that some communities such as Murle are not educated, [which is why] they are not being considered for the high government positions. The slogan is not true. Murle community has educated people in all the levels of education and they can present their country very well like anyone else in any position in the government" (48).

## 5.5 Summary

Access to information and opportunities and participation seem to vary according to different factors such as gender, age, level of education and access to government institutions in Pibor County. In particular, young women seem to hardly have access to information about governance and they can only marginally participate in community decision-making and political processes. At the local level in rural and urban contexts some venues for participation such as community consultations and meetings conducted by chiefs and administrators exist. However, these meetings are mostly only attended by men. Furthermore, the decisions taken and the statements collected at these meetings are not necessarily considered at higher levels of government. Participation and influence at higher government levels is seen by many respondents as limited. Respondents felt that Murle are underrepresented and marginalized at the state and national levels. Respondents felt that their representation and participation were purposely limited, which negatively affected the perception of the state and national government.

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<sup>19</sup> Such women's groups had also existed in Pibor town and other more urban settlements in Pibor County. A female respondent suggested that in rural contexts women's group were not common because women are busy with work (39).

# 6 Conclusion

## 6.1 Revisiting the research questions.

This research was conducted in November 2013, before the outbreak of the armed conflict that since Mid-December affects South Sudan. Consequently, this paper does not address the outbreak of violence. The current politico-military crisis remains a topic for further study.

This study aimed at exploring three main research questions:

- 1 Internal state-building processes. How do people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state in conflict-affected situations affect state legitimacy, state ability to provide social protection and services, and under what circumstances does this lead to state building?
- 2 International engagement with the state. How do international actors interact with the state and attempt to build the capacity of state institutions to deliver social protection and basic services?
- 3 Livelihoods and response. What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support people to make a secure living?

This research was mostly oriented to questions 1 and 3.

Livelihoods in Pibor County were under threat even before the escalation of conflict in 2013. The erratic climatic conditions of Pibor County particular in the plains, livestock diseases and the lack of infrastructure and services pose severe challenges to rural livelihoods, which have been further challenged by recurrent cattle raids and armed inter- and intra-communal conflicts and coercive disarmament in recent years. Since 2012/2013, violence further escalated in Pibor County resulting in massive displacement, loss of assets and increasing food insecurity. Much remains unknown about the situation of Murle IDPs, particularly those in remote rural areas of South Sudan; our research was limited to IDPs living in Juba. An overwhelming majority of the IDPs with whom we spoke expressed their desire to return home to Pibor County and resume their pre-conflict lives and livelihoods. This research illustrates that support by kin and community members is a vital copy strategy for Murle affected by crisis. Trans-local networks of mutual support exist between Pibor County, and Juba and other locations where Murle communities live. Due to these networks displaced Murle found support among relatives and other Murle community members in Juba.

Respondents blamed the state and national government for what they characterized as the pervasive neglect and marginalization of Pibor County in terms of infrastructure, basic services, development and allocation of resources. Interestingly, such perspectives were quite similar to what we heard in northern Jonglei from Lou Nuer respondents in February 2013, though the Murle had perhaps less compassion for any perceived constraints on the government's ability to improve the situation. Before the escalation of violent conflict in Pibor County, only very limited services were available in administrative headquarters settlements, particularly in Pibor town. Rural areas were essentially void of services.

A considerable number of the Murle IDPs with whom we spoke had been living in Pibor town and other administrative headquarters before they were displaced to Juba; consequently, they had some access to services before they fled Pibor County, but clearly expected more services from the government. Inhabitants of rural areas of Pibor County where services have not been available in the past might have different expectations and views of the government in reference to services, but we were unable to speak with many such individuals. IDPs in Juba faced challenges in accessing basic services, and expressed feeling of being neglected and expecting more services and support from the government. Comparing the availability of services in Juba with Pibor town, respondents often felt that the situation in Pibor had been much better, though it is difficult to know how much such perspectives are influenced by nostalgia and simple desire to be home, as well as low expectations due to historical lack of service delivery.

The relationship of many Murle respondents to the state and national government is characterized by deep mistrust and the impression that the government not only neglects and marginalizes them but also that individuals working for the government and the SPLA were their active foes and wanted to get rid of them. The fact that most Murle had left administrative headquarters in Pibor County and literally ran away from anywhere where the government had a presence illustrates this difficult relationship. Interviewees described Lou Nuer as their primary adversaries in armed conflict but many believed that Dinka Bor were mainly responsible for the disadvantaged situation of Pibor County, and that they had manipulated Lou Nuer to attack the county in July 2013 and earlier instances. Such perceptions of official and widespread discrimination against the Murle are borne out by our earlier fieldwork as well as other analysis of the conflict in Jonglei by researchers and human rights organizations.

Life in Pibor County was clearly framed by multiple conflict dynamics, including violence between David Yau Yau's rebel movement (now subsided) and the SPLA which spilled over into attacks by both sides on civilians, concurrent attacks by neighboring groups such as the Lou Nuer, and intra-communal violence between age-sets and other groups. Interviewees knew that the Murle are often characterized by others as the main aggressors in Jonglei's conflicts, and associated with child abduction, cattle raiding and lack of education. Many suggested that for these reasons, the government was uninterested in making peace with Yau Yau or developing Pibor County, but nonetheless many expressed hope that a peace agreement would be forthcoming and that security would improve enough to enable them to return home. The signing of a peace deal between GRSS and Yau Yau in March 2014 is likely related to the ongoing politico-military crisis in South Sudan – given that parts of northern Jonglei are no longer under government control, GRSS seems to have a strong interest to cooperate with Yau Yau and exert authority over the southern part of the state.

The Murle do not constitute a homogenous community. They are divided along different lines including the division between Boma and Lotilla Murle, members of different age-sets, people who supported the SPLM/A during the war and others who supported the Government of Sudan, individuals who joined the armed uprising against the government and those who did not, as well as (relatively) urban and rural Murle. These divisions appear to impact community relationships differently depending on the subject, the context and the time.

Given the remoteness and mobility of many Murle communities, they are generally outside the reach of the state and administrative bodies, other than through local chiefs. In such areas, age-sets and clans are the dominant socio-political entities, and authority is wielded primarily by chiefs, elders, age-set leaders, and spiritual leaders. Although chiefs are important stakeholders at the local level, their influence tends to be limited due to the historically acephalous nature of Murle society. Recent armed violence and mass displacement in and from Pibor County have further weakened and disconnected local government institutions and the state in general from the populace. In remote rural areas as well as in Juba, Murle IDPs mainly relate to communal authorities and governance mechanisms and they survive mostly through communal support.

Access to information and opportunities for participation existed to a limited extent at the local level in Pibor County and also among IDPs in Juba, though these mechanisms largely excluded women, particularly young women. Respondents did not criticize their lack of participation opportunities at the local level in Pibor County. In Juba, respondents were not linked to the local administration, and interviewees felt that they were not under the purview of the local government.

Improved security and peace in Pibor County are preconditions for allowing Murle IDPs to return and for livelihood recovery to begin, but it is clear that the situation to which they will return (and in some cases, probably already have returned) is dire. Pibor County was already badly in need of roads, improved infrastructure, economic development, and increased access to services and alternative sources of livelihoods prior to the devastating conflict in mid-2013. The factors that, at least in part, drove Yau Yau's rebellion as well as inter-communal cattle raiding by age-sets competing for dominance and marriage rights and other types of violence have not ceased to exist. Indeed, in many ways, the situation has likely only worsened due to the destruction of infrastructure by armed attackers on Pibor County and the loss of assets and unraveling of social ties due to displacement. Moreover, the current armed conflict affecting Jonglei State and other areas of South Sudan further hampers recovery and development, particularly as the conflict continues to damage oil revenues and demand both the

attention and (decreasing) funds of GRSS. The future stability and development of Pibor County, like that of all of South Sudan, depend greatly on the resolution of the current national crisis and a subsequent investment of tremendous time, goodwill, and resources in recovery.

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# Annex

## IDP livelihoods, governance, and access to services

This section describes livelihoods, access to services, and governance among IDPs in Juba, as they were described to us in interviews. While we did not set out to explore the research questions as they relate to displacement, many interviewees understandably wished to discuss their present circumstances more than they wanted to tell us about the lives they had left behind. This led to fairly detailed descriptions of some aspects of IDP life in Juba, particularly access to basic services. We have made brief references to some of this information above, where relevant, but the bulk of it is captured in this section.

### IDP livelihoods in Juba

Most interviewed Murle IDPs did not have wage labour or any kind of regular income in Juba. One respondent stated: “While people were able to create income in Pibor town, they have no such opportunities in Juba” (30). Several displaced men who had worked for the SPLA and the government in Pibor town continued to be employed in Juba (35, 42, 44, 55), though in some cases their payment was not regular (42, 55) (as was true of most government jobs in 2012 and 2013). Murle IDPs who continued to have formal employment in Juba reported supporting their extended families with their income (42). Some families were also divided by displacement. In some cases the primary breadwinners remained back in Pibor County and were not able to support their family in Juba. The wife of a local government employee explained that her husband remained in Pibor County and had no opportunity to send her a part of his salary (51).

Whereas different options to earn income including casual work had existed in Pibor town, opportunities for casual work were limited in Juba. Several female respondents, who had been working in Pibor town, explained that they have no work in Juba (10, 22, 42, 44, 51, 55, 60). Some women generated income in Juba by washing clothes and dishes, supporting other families in house work, and by fetching and selling water (11, 37, 52, 57). A young Murle respondent reported renting a small teashop next to the compound where her family lived; she borrowed tea, sugar and the other material every morning from a shop, then payed the shopkeeper in the evening (22). Other respondents reported getting by with loans of various kinds as well. A female respondent whose husband is a soldier explained that she was able to buy goods from traders on credit, which would then be paid off when her husband received his salary (42). Some men worked as porters in markets (57), one as a butcher (35) and others as casual labourers (37). We met several men who produced woolen whistle holders for soldiers. A respondent described working for two to three days on one whistle holder and then selling it to the SPLA for 2 SSP.

Important income-generating activities and coping mechanisms to which Murle had resorted in Pibor County were reportedly unavailable in Juba. Murle IDPs did not have cattle in Juba which they could sell to buy food, nor did they have arable land to cultivate (11, 36a), or access to wild products for consumption or sale (10, 22, 24, 39). A female respondent stated that Murle IDPs faced difficulties earning money in Juba as they “do not know the places here. We cannot engage in small activities” (22). It must be noted that, in some cases, respondents made contradicting statements, first stressing that they lacked any opportunities to generate income and later referring to income-generating activities of household members. Such statements may be an example of the “needs assessment narrative” that some respondents gave us in apparent hope that we would disburse aid in return.

The most important coping mechanism of Murle IDPs in Juba seemed to be support from relatives, friends, other Murle community members and neighbours. IDPs frequently lived with relatives, former neighbours or friends (2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 30, 33, 37, 39, 42, 43, 44, 51, 52, 57, 60) who also provided them – if they had the necessary means - with food and other kinds of support (2, 9, 11, 15, 24, 28, 35b, 39, 42, 51, 52, 56, 60). The Murle community in Juba was described as closely linked and mutually supportive (32, 37). A young herder who fled to Juba stated that he and his family survive “by begging from people who work for the government”. Relatives usually support him if they have means to assist. He sometimes also asks members of the same age-set for support or other Murle community members (12). Support mechanisms also may work between unrelated individuals and members of

different ethnic groups; some IDPs also reported receiving support in the form of food, housing plots and shelter from non-Murle friends, colleagues and at times also from people whom they did not know before being displaced to Juba (11, 30, 38).

Given the lack of wage and casual labour and the limited availability of coping mechanisms, many Murle IDPs living in Juba faced economic challenges and lacked money to buy food and other goods (01b, 11, 19, 22, 28, 39, 44, 51, 52, 54, 57). Several respondents noted that Murle IDPs face hunger (1, 16, 37, 44, 51, 52, 55, 57, 60). One female respondent noted. "It is difficult to get food in Juba" (52) and another respondent stated: "Hunger is hard in Juba. Everything needs money in Juba water, food, health, education etc." (51). However, not all Murle IDPs are impoverished. More affluent families bought compounds and built houses and have an income or support from affluent relatives (55).

### **Governance and participation among Murle IDPs**

In Juba displaced chiefs, elders and other community leaders engage in conflict resolution, community governance and food distribution in Juba (8, 28, 51, 52). In that sense Murle IDP leaders continued their administrative and governance activities in Juba and constituted to some degree a parallel structure to the local administration in Juba. Yet, the displacement impacted on the influence of chiefs. A chief explained that due to the crisis he had no contact with his people who run to the bush (7). At the same time, IDPs in Juba were seemingly unconnected to local administration in Juba. One respondent who lived in Khor William noted that Murle IDPs know that a local administrator had jurisdiction over their area of the city, but they did not feel a part of his community: "We are under Pibor payam. We are staying here as refugees. We are not connected with them" (28).

### **Services in Juba**

Overall, we received an impression that, while some respondents recognized greater service coverage in Juba, they actually had poorer access than in (the population centres of) Pibor County. It is impossible to know how much of that comparison was "objectively" (to the extent that there is such a thing) accurate and how much was colored by longing to be home.

This section will describe the types of services explained to us by IDPs in Juba, roughly along the same topics as those described above as available in Pibor County.

### **Water and sanitation**

Water access in Juba appears highly dependent on location, with one woman reporting that she walks two hours to reach the river (Nile) to get water (25) while others reported a mere five-minute walk (56, 57). Contamination and water-borne illness are a major problem; a male elder living near Konyo Konyo market said that "[w]e have no clean water but we get water from the river, that is why some of us are affected by the sickness, because of the dirty water" (56).

Similarly, sanitation in households and compounds is minimal (19, 57) – one compound visited had many people living within its walls but only two latrine toilets (57). In another situation, where many Murle IDPs had settled in the compound of one Murle politician who holds a senior position in the GRSS, his compound was actually used as an aid staging area; the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had distributed food and built latrines there (the respondent did not specify how many (16). Upkeep of any of the latrine facilities is unknown.

Water is also a livelihoods asset for some households, who may enter and participate in the supply chain at a number of points, as described above in the Livelihoods section.

### **Health**

While health services were available in Juba, respondents were displeased with the cost of services as well as the quality, in many cases. Juba Teaching Hospital and the SPLA hospital at the military barracks were the places most often mentioned that where IDPs sought care, likely because of geographic proximity to where they lived (2, 38, 39). The SPLA hospital was said to have long lines, and both

locations were said to lack equipment, supplies and medicine (2, 37, 38, 39). It was noted that some Murle remain afraid to go near the SPLA after the violence committed against them by SPLA soldiers in Pibor County (2), and so refused to go to the SPLA hospital. Many respondents told us that they lacked the funds to pay for their own medicines at local pharmacies; hence, the biggest barrier to accessing useful care was the availability not of care itself, but of funds to pay for it (2, 25, 37, 38, 39, 55, 56). A woman told us that her child was sick, and though she believed him to have malaria, she had no money to pay for the medication he would need, so she gave him Panadol (acetaminophen) in hopes that it would help improve his condition in some way (37). Respondents told us that malaria was common in Juba, along with waterborne illnesses as mentioned above, hunger-related health problems, and respiratory illness (36a, 37, 56).

## **Education**

There was at least some education access available to IDPs, though the quality and provenance were inconsistent. While the GRSS was widely acknowledged to have operated at least some of the schools in Pibor County, there did not exist the same availability of GRSS-funded schools in Juba for IDP children or for adults who wished to pursue education. Respondents told us that schools were available but very expensive, so they could not afford the fees (1, 2, 15, 25, 28, 38, 42, 56), which were said to be 300 SSP per term, per student for primary school and 500 SSP per term for secondary (2, 38).

Instead, several of the IDP communities within Juba had organized their own education centres. In the Hai Jobarana neighborhood, there was a self-organized school that met under a tree, offering instruction in first through third grades to community children as well as adults, some of whom had been in school already in Pibor while others had decided to use their time in Juba to learn literacy (28, 33). There has been little research into the correlation between displacement and education, but it would be worth exploration to understand better how displacement may, in certain cases, encourage education even as it is also undoubtedly disruptive to many.

Another IDP school in the Konyo Konyo (market) neighborhood offers first and second primary grade instruction, with 260 pupils and nine volunteer teachers from the community (57). The school meets under a thatched grass mat strung up on poles to provide shelter from the sun, and is also used as a meeting place for community gatherings and church services. Residents there told us that they wanted their children to be educated, but that another reason for organizing the school, and offering instruction even to very young children, was to occupy their time and keep children from wandering in the market and on the highly trafficked roads; there had been incidents in which children had been gravely injured (57).

Another school had been organized by the church in the Khor William neighborhood had, with 400 students and 12 teachers (1, 9, 11, 15, 24, 38). One respondent told us that the school offered primary grades one through four (9), while another said that classes were offered through grade eight (24). The church had organized the school, solicited some donated textbooks and chalk from NGOs, and asked youth to be involved as teachers; these were essentially literate and relatively better-educated community members, not recognized as teachers by the state (9).

## **Humanitarian assistance and social protection**

Some humanitarian assistance was distributed in to IDPs in Juba in mid-2013 (2, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 22, 25, 26, 30, 32 35, 35b, 36, 37, 42, 46, 47, 54, 56, 57). Nearly all of these reports of assistance described receiving some food and building materials, including poles and plastic sheeting with which to build shelters, handed out by WFP and IOM. Many said that the assistance had been appreciated – one man commented that food handouts from the UN were “why we are still alive” (57), and a GRSS official commented that without international agencies and NGOs, “no Murle would have survived” (16) – but remained insufficient. A female respondent explained that her family had received 10 kg of sorghum. When we conducted the interview all the sorghum had already been consumed (25). Another female respondent stated that all families had received 15 kg of sorghum, lentils and salt (2). A male respondent noted: “The assistance is appreciated but the flour and oil is not enough” (35).

Several people reported that the food distribution had occurred only once, in June (47), August (2, 19, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 35, 37, 42, 54, 56) or September 2013 (46). No one knew of any future distribution of food or other supplies, other than one woman who said there had been a promise of mosquito nets by the Ministry of Health, though she did not know when they might arrive (25). Another woman commented that the government has given nothing to IDPs (36a). Asked about support for Murle IDPs in Juba a staff member of an UN agency verified that agencies are doing assessments in Juba, but noted that it is difficult to support Murle IDPs because, while they are certainly vulnerable, there are many other vulnerable groups living in Juba (32).

Murle respondents underlined that the support of the UN and other agencies is of great importance for Murle IDPs living in Juba. One male respondent explained that Murle IDPs only have the food which they received from the UN. "That is why we are still alive" (57). However, hardly any IDPs mentioned GRSS support or assistance. One female respondent denied any support from GRSS (2). She underlined that "people in GRSS are the same people who have a problem with the Murle. They want us to die" (2). Moreover, a church and an education programme for women distribute food to Murle IDPs in one of the churches where we conducted interviews (4, 9, 10, 11).

We have heard of nothing in the way of social protection programming in Juba.

## Security

Security in Juba is discussed as a different matter than that in Pibor County, where insecurity has proliferated as a result of various conflicts that, in our estimation, put security outside the realm of a discussion of services and make it more deserving of its own discussion of conflict (see Conflict section above). In Juba, security falls under the rubric of both the same and different issues rubric(s) as in Pibor, some of which are specific to Murle displacement and the underlying conflict, and some of which are tied to life in a rapidly and chaotically expanding urban area with poor policing and rule of law (Grant and Thompson, 2013).

A number of respondents noted that they felt markedly safer in Juba than they did in Pibor County (1, 2, 7, 23, 36a, 39), though relative safety did not mean they actually felt *safe*. One female respondent noted that most Murle IDPs lived with relatives wherever possible, or other protected spaces with personal connections, and that they did not want to live in IDP camps because they feared being attacked based on their ethnicity (2). That said, ethnic conflict generally did not seem to be nearly as significant a cause of insecurity as it was for Murle outside of Juba; the research team noted that there was a shortcut through the SPLA barracks area that was frequently used by Murle, and that a Dinka SPLA commander lived next door to a church compound that housed many Murle IDPs, seemingly without friction. It was also noted that Murle IDPs felt safer in Juba than in Bor, where they would fear discrimination and insecurity at the hands of state government and the Dinka Bor ethnic group in general; one respondent noted many IDPs had purposely left Jonglei entirely because of the security crisis in Pibor County, rather than going to Bor (57). Another interviewee described IDPs' reluctance to seek safety in Bor as partly due to past attacks on Murle in Bor town (12). There have been verified reports of targeted killings of Murle, including four people shot while awaiting treatment in the MSF hospital in Juba and several others killed in Bor in 2007 – incidents which were never investigated – and three Murle killed near Bor where they were traveling to take part in the President's Peace Conference in 2012 (Small Arms Survey, 2012).

While physical security was less of an issue in Juba, a sense of the precariousness of their situation pervaded many respondents' descriptions of their current situation, not only because of the temporariness of their living situations and strong desire to return to Pibor. Even in the absence of violence between Murle IDPs and their non-Murle neighbors in Juba, we found strong skepticism of state authorities and apparatus, and little optimism that the lack of open hostilities might develop into the actual trust or provision of basic services and opportunities that would improve the situations of the IDPs (much less allow them to return home). One man noted that IDPs in Juba "have no power to ask for education and other services. Whom are we going to ask? Which government? The government which fought us? When you disagree with your brother, when he tries to kill you, will you ask your brother for services?"



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