

Research and knowledge systems in South Sudan

An analysis prepared for INASP by Jok Madut Jok, with a political analysis by Jason Mosley

Contents

Research, knowledge and education-based systems Jok Madut Jok	2
1. Introduction.....	2
Authors	2
2. Background	3
3. Research and knowledge systems in South Sudan	4
3.1 Research centres.....	4
3.2 Challenges and weakness in the functioning of research systems	5
3.2.1 Practical challenges	6
3.3 Thematic focus of research	7
3.4 Donors	7
3.5 Dynamics and politics of donor funded research.....	8
4. Access to research information	9
4.1. ICT infrastructure	9
5. Types of research and publication	10
5.1 Consultancy research	10
5.2 Academic research	10
5.3 Government research	10
5.4 Published literature base	10
6. How research is used in policy and practice	11
7. Gendered Dimensions of Research	11
8. Concluding remarks.....	11
9. Further reading	12
Political analysis Jason Mosley.....	13



Research, knowledge and education-based systems

Jok Madut Jok

1. Introduction

INASP is continually exploring options for further work and new projects. As part of these exploratory measures, several in-depth country profiles have been commissioned to bring insight into research and knowledge systems in various countries. In this document, we look at South Sudan; the country's background, the research landscape, higher education system and extent of use of research in policymaking. We also include a section on political analysis by Jason Mosley. In the interests of openness and sharing, INASP makes these reports available online for use by peer organizations and other interested parties. Views are the authors' own.

Authors

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2. Background

South Sudan is a country born of war, having been involved in a civil war for the better part of 50 years, since Sudan attained independence from Britain in 1956. In 2005, the world community pushed through a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the north and south of the country north to end the latest, and most deadly, round of civil war (1983-2005) and pave the way for separation. The world's newest country was created in 2011, following a referendum that returned over 98% of the vote in favour of independence. By voting to exit the union, it seemed that South Sudanese were bidding farewell to a life of war. There was hope that the region would make a quick transition to stability, development and prosperity. Given the history of its peoples' demands for democracy and civil liberties there was hope for success. The country also has large oil reserves, capable of producing significant revenue to support a strong economy.

Unfortunately, 10 years after the CPA, very few of these expectations and promises have been realized. Instead, things have got worse. Human security, whether measured by personal safety; community security; improved livelihoods; positive health indicators or the overall stability of the country, had begun to deteriorate in the years leading up to independence and continued to worsen thereafter. This decline is attributable to the failure of government to effectively implement or reform policy, combined with the legacy of 50 years of war.

At the time of independence, South Sudan was the world's most war-devastated territory since World War II. It had only 40 kilometers of paved roads, some of the world's worst human development indicators and poverty levels almost unequalled on the continent. Several factors combined to the disadvantage of the state including: a widely armed population; an army that became the largest, most dysfunctional and most expensive department in the country; a rural population cut off from basic services; and a public sector that outweighed the private sector. The wars had left behind a weakened human resource capacity and shattered relations between its more than 60 ethnic groups. Having won liberation from the north, there was nothing to maintain political unity. In the place of a vibrant civil society, there was a corrupt political leadership, rampant armed militias, a youth bulge and near-zero basic infrastructure.

Competition for power within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement escalated into civil war towards the end of 2013 fueled by a general unwillingness among the politico-military elite to compromise. This war spread quickly to cover nearly one third of the country in the Greater Upper Nile region with fighting continuing to rage. The incalculable costs have impacted on resources and materials, human lives, ethnic relations and the country's image in the international community.

A major obstacle to stability and development has been the lack of capacity in South Sudan's human resources and institutions. During the war, the majority of the population had no access to education, the only exception being those who sought refuge abroad, most of whom were unable or unwilling to return to the country. This translated into limited capacity to create national policies and development plans or vision for transformation. Above all, the question of how to build a sense of nationhood to go hand-in-hand with the development of state institutions was never asked or addressed. The escalation of conflict since late 2013 has deepened this crisis.



3. Research and knowledge systems in South Sudan

3.1 Research centres

3.11 Government research institutions

Experience and evidence from other post-conflict environments suggested South Sudan needed to identify its natural resources and then invest in higher education, technical training institutes and programmes to utilize these resources for the wellbeing of the whole country. To this effect, the post-CPA Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) strived to use research, policy planning and development vision in order to effectively use its natural resources. The GoSS established various research, training and analysis centres, some to be housed within the major government departments and others as independent academic institutions. The most visible of these are:

- The **Government Accountancy Training Centre** attached to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and tasked with preparing the staff of all the directorates of finance and administration of all public institutions, ministries and national commissions. The undersecretary of Finance, Salvatore Garang Marbiordit, is the chief of the centre.
- The **Research and Training Division** of the Central Bank.
- The **National Bureau of Statistics**, which is an independent parastatal, led by Isaiah Chol Aruei.
- The **National Research Council**, which is the government body responsible for reviewing and approving all research proposals throughout the country. It is attached to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The council is responsible, at least in theory, for mapping the country's research needs.
- The **Council for Higher Education** is also responsible for accreditation of universities.
- The **Centre for Peace and Development Studies**, based at the University of Juba, the main national university. The director is Luka Biong Deng with Tresio Oromo as deputy.
- The **National Legislative Assembly** (lower house) and the **Council of States** (upper house) have various research units that assist the members of parliament to keep abreast with the pulse of the nation. The two houses of the parliament are headed by Magok Rundial for NLA and Bol Chan for the CS.

3.12 Institutions of higher learning

The country has five national universities, one private university and a number of vocational training centres:

- The **University of Juba** is the leading national university with a full academic curriculum that covers all major areas of scientific research in natural resources, environment, technology, medicine, ICT, law, social sciences and humanities.
- The others include **University of Bahr el-Ghazal** in Wau, **University of Upper Nile** in Malakal, **University of Rumbek**, **John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology** plus the private **Catholic University of South Sudan**.
- The Vocational Training Centres are not operational, as they have not been revived since the war ended. This is despite promises from the government that they will be funded, refurbished and equipped to train the country's massive unskilled workforce.
- The Minister of Education, Science and Technology is Dr. John Gai Yoh. The president of the Republic is the titular Chancellor for all of the universities, and each is headed operationally by a Vice Chancellor. Vice Chancellors include: John Akec, Juba; Isaac Cuir Riak, Upper Nile; Samson Wassara, Bahr el-Ghazal; Aggrey Awien, Rubek; Julia Aker Duany; John Garang, Bor; Michael Chuleseus, Catholic University.

3.13 Post-graduate education

The University of Juba is the only national university that is accredited to issue postgraduate degrees, up to doctoral level. This system, however, has not operated well since the university relocated back to Juba 10 years ago. Most of the teaching staff of the university were northern Sudanese who were not permitted or who did not want to return to South Sudan after separation, and this meant that academic programmes beyond Bachelor's degree are only starting to become operational again. Students now only enrol in undergraduate and Master's level programmes.



3.14 Private and civil society research organizations

There are a few private policy research centres that endeavour to produce research and attempt to advise the government on public policy matters. These include: Sudd Institute; Ebony Centre for Strategic Studies; Centre for Strategic Analysis and Research; Cush Institute; South Sudan Law Society; the Nile Institute.

3.15 Activities of research entities

By far the most active institutions engaged in scientific research are the three major national universities of Juba, Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile, and to a lesser extent, the John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology, located at Bor. The three main universities have medical schools, veterinary science, environmental studies, natural resource management, architecture and geology. This is in addition to humanities and social sciences, including a recently inaugurated School of Public Policy at the University of Juba.

Unfortunately their ability to produce cutting-edge scientific knowledge is hampered by a lack of various things including: lab equipment; funding; qualified teaching staff; access to computers and the internet.

Numbers of students range from 1,000, at the smallest university, to 5,000 at Juba. But numbers fluctuate, as so many become frustrated with the absence of teaching staff, lack of classroom space, books, boarding houses and poor-quality of education. Some leave to seek higher education in other African countries and even further in Asia.

The Catholic University of South Sudan is only about seven years old but with its American style of education that encourages independent thought, it has quickly proven to offer one of the best services. It has already established itself as a leader in agricultural research at its Wau campus and in management and public policy studies at its Juba campus. It has about seven permanent teaching staff and a host of part-time lecturers from the US, South Sudan and East Africa.

In terms of policy, the public institutions (such as the National Bureau of Statistics, Centre for Peace and Development Studies), and the various ministries with small research offices, fall short. They produce poor quality research and have limited numbers of really motivated students and lead researchers. Unfortunately, the research products being produced by and for government, while they have some quality, are not being properly used by MPs.

Private think tanks and civil-society organizations, such as the Law Society, the Sudd Institute and the Ebony Centre for Strategic Studies can be relied upon for higher quality research. These three are the only truly operational independent research organizations, maintaining a steady production of knowledge. They have become the go-to institutions of independent thinking with a degree of influence on national public policy decision-making. They are run by South Sudanese academics and practitioners and derive their value from indigenous knowledge, but they are subject to funding constraints, having to rely on foreign donor or foundation funding, mainly from the global north.

The organizations have very small numbers of staff; the Sudd Institute has no more than eight researchers and administrators at any given moment while the Ebony Centre has six people. The Law Society, though narrowly focused on justice and the constitution, has more staff, over 40 people. They are the most active in the field of policy research, with weekly, monthly and quarterly publications or public forums in which researchers dialogue with public officials on a variety of topics.

3.2 Challenges and weakness in the functioning of research systems

The biggest obstacle to the development of research and higher education is the means for generating knowledge and the ability to translate that knowledge into actionable ideas for the nation's development. To produce a knowledge system, countries often have national commitments to fund institutes of higher education, government-affiliated think tanks and develop a reservoir of qualified individuals. The degree to which major policy decisions are based on evidence-based analysis is questionable. How much public officials consume research products and base decisions on them is not well-established. NGOs and foreign development agencies may well use research more extensively.

Any knowledge generated is often destined for foreign journals, NGO offices, UN and donor agencies, but is hardly ever used as a way to improve national public policy at government level in-country. However, even the NGOs that produce this research do not use or keep it institutionally, as it is often project-specific, discarded at the end of the project. Combined with the high turnover of NGO staff, it means that new staff often have to 'reinvent the wheel' every time they are deployed to South Sudan and they encounter very steep learning curves.



The situation in South Sudan has multiple levels of weakness in the use of knowledge system:

- Enabling environment for the production of knowledge. There is no credible commitment to facilitate this production, as evidenced by the lack of funding for research and the reliance on donor support for local institutions.
- Human capacity. There is a dearth of qualified researchers, the few available being so under-funded that they often resort to working for NGOs and foreign donors or development agencies. Government officials are often not capable of interpreting, analysing and using research evidence in policy. Teaching staff are under resourced and over worked. There is no commitment to support the production of a skilled workforce, and the field of knowledge production will most likely continue to lack capacity for the foreseeable future.
- Funding patterns. Members of academic staff of the universities can find themselves hamstrung by a lack of local research funding; most researchers who have produced credible peer-reviewed academic work have only been able to do so through foreign grants.
- “NGOization of academia”. Academics are discouraged by low wages, and a lack of promotion due to a failure to produce and publish research, the basis for academic promotions, a vicious cycle indeed. As an alternative, many move into working as consultants for NGOs, donor agencies and UN organizations, making academic independence nearly impossible, as they only respond to research questions and terms of reference produced by consulting agencies. This is not unique to South Sudan. Mahmood Mamdani of the Makerere University Institute for Social Studies described this situation in Africa as “NGOization of academia.”
- Access to information. The weakness among qualified researchers is linked to a lack of access to information, the internet and computers. Access to the internet, where it exists, is extremely poor, rendering researchers unable to read journals, web-based research products or communicate with peers and counterparts abroad.
- Communication. This level is about the channels through which to feed generated knowledge into policy decisions and through which decision makers channel their questions and request for such knowledge. On the whole, such channels are non-existent or unclear. The result is that major public policy decisions are made in a vacuum, based on the sentiments of the public officials concerned and not on any kind of credible evidence-based analysis.
- Coordination/cooperation. There are limitations in the area of coordination between the research agencies themselves (which would limit areas of duplication) and between knowledge producers and policymakers. Many think tank and university researchers complain that public institutions do not allow access to records and object to requests for interviews, often through fear of criticism. This is a major hindrance to knowledge acquisition and to the ability of institutions to learn about themselves, all of which obstructs the country’s development agenda.

3.21 Practical challenges

Apart from technical challenges that researchers face, the production of quality research in South Sudan is often faced with political, logistical and security issues. For example, despite the existence of the National Research Council, it is not functioning and hardly anyone actually knows where it is physically located, with no designated name or contact information for a prospective researcher to contact.

The national or state government does not maintain a single place where researchers could go to obtain research permits, and without a government research permit, the researcher runs into troubles with the security personnel. They demand evidence of authorization for the research project, for interviews, taking photos and travelling to remote places of the country. Obtaining such a permit requires personal connections with senior members of the government, personalizing a process that is supposed to be streamlined and institutionalized.

Qualified field researchers, interviewers, enumerators, data entry people and translators, capable of producing high-quality outputs, are hard to come by, particularly in remote areas.

There are also many logistical hurdles to research, travel throughout the country is very difficult, costly and downright dangerous.



3.3 Thematic focus of research

Being a country beset by insecurity, development needs, humanitarian issues, health problems, environmental issues relating to the production of fossil fuels, by political violence and by ethnic rivalries and resource-based ethnic violence, South Sudan is a country that is over-researched in these fields, but mainly by foreign researchers, international NGOs and foreign consultants.

These areas of need remain important as research themes for the government and are being monitored by national research bodies, public or private, even though the government does not actively fund research in these areas.

- **Security:** including the national defence force, national security agencies and other organized forces, is the leading area of government funding. It is estimated that the government puts more than 50% of the national expenditure, nearly US\$500 million annually, into this sector. How much of this goes into research is not known, as the Department of Defence is very secretive about use of public funds.
- **Economic development** and provision of public goods and services is the area in which most citizens, having been deprived of these services in the old Sudan, demanded immediate action on soon after the end of the civil war. This is most notably in areas of **infrastructure such as roads and electricity, telecommunication, educational facilities and health care centres**, as whatever existed previously was destroyed.
- Of great importance is the area of **peace-building and reconciliation** to mend the ethnic relations that were affected by conflict, including recognition of human rights abuses and demands for accountability, justice and reparations for victims of sexual violence, mass atrocity, targeting of non-combatants and destruction or theft of property.
- **Job creation and employment**, especially among the **youth population** is an important theme. South Sudan is a very youthful country, with 73% of the population below the age of 30, according to the 2010 census.
- **Food security** is a priority, especially the development of agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and how to move the country away from its unhealthy **dependence on oil**, which is a finite resource and source of political instability. Agriculture provides livelihoods for the majority of the country, especially with over 90% of the population living in rural areas. South Sudan is home to Africa's largest concentration of livestock. With over **12 million** heads of cattle, sheep and goats, South Sudan has more animals than people, and yet, the country imports meat, yoghurt, butter and other milk products.
- The country's wildlife is legendary, with antelope migrations along the Boma plateau in south eastern parts of the country only second to Kenya and Tanzania's Serengeti. How to **conserve** these majestic animals, develop **tourism**, and maintain the delicate ecological balance long sustained by generations of South Sudanese is a challenge and a major area of research.
- Another very important research theme is **health**, including **gender-based violence, high maternal and child mortality, immunization coverage**, control of **malaria, TB and chronic non-communicable disease** such as cardiac morbidity, diabetes and cancers. Though the government only allocates a minuscule percentage of the national budget to the health sector, this is an area that receives a great deal of foreign funding and enjoys a high profile in government rhetoric.

3.4 Donors

Donors contributed an estimated total of US\$2.1 billion to the activities listed in section 3.3 between 2005 and 2011, after which funding began to decline due to accusations of corruption. (This figure does not include humanitarian funding through the UN, which spent US\$400 million annually between 2005 and 2010.)

The leading donors for research in South Sudan are:

- The United States through both government agencies and private foundations, such as the United States Agency for International Development, United States Institute of Peace, National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the Centres for Disease Control, Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa.
- Norwegian government, through public agencies and think tanks, like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of International Development and Peace Research Institute Oslo.



- Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada's International Development and Research Centre.
- United Kingdom through its Department for International Development, its major universities and private foundations like the Wellcome Trust.
- Germany, mainly through its lead development agency, German Agency for Technical Cooperation or GTZ, recently changed to GIZ. Germany also supports and uses research through its many political foundations, like Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- The Netherlands, through its foreign affairs ministry, think tanks like Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, and NGOs like CORDAID, Pax Christie, MSF.
- Switzerland, through Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency.
- Australia has recently joined the effort.
- Various United Nations agencies.
- The World Bank.
- The European Union is also a prominent player in development funding as well as research activities.

3.5 Dynamics and politics of donor funded research

Much donor funding is channelled through organizations based in donor countries, and does not directly target South Sudanese researchers and institutions. The exception is US funding, much of which goes to government institutions or private think tanks. Benefits to South Sudan accrue in the form of capacity building for local researchers who often accompany or collaborate with expatriate researchers. Other benefits include the construction of facilities, such as the College of Law at the University of Juba, which was constructed through a grant from the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, complete with a library and potential for future internet connectivity.

Bilateral donor contribution from the global north to research and development in the south, generous as it is, can sometimes tilt the research agenda towards donor countries' perspectives and national interests. For example, donor interests in specific sectors may be pushed through against the priorities of the recipient country or institution, damaging relationships and raising local suspicions about the motive behind the funding. This is certainly the situation in South Sudan, and this is exacerbated by poor communication.

There is a political dynamic in the dialectic relationship between donors and recipient country governments. In South Sudan, donors have at times been seen as having a neo-colonial attitude; for example when criticizing the government, or giving the impression that support is conditional on certain expected governance issues, such as human rights, democracy and corruption.

Mechanisms do exist through which donor agencies coordinate their actions so as to reduce the potential for duplication, waste and uncoordinated policy actions. For example, between 2005 and 2012 there were two processes to this effect. One was a European Union-funded programme called Evaluation and Monitoring Team, set up to ensure correct implementation of the CPA, especially on resource-sharing between Sudan and Southern Sudan. Although long since dissolved, it remains as a significant repository of institutional knowledge. When it was active, it had the potential to bring together all the donors who were supporting the CPA to witness the real-life impacts of their funding.

The other was the Joint Donor Team, a funding mechanism that put together European countries and Canada to coordinate funding and projects, manage the funding pledges that were made at the Oslo conference soon after the CPA was signed, and the review management of oil revenue by the government.



4. Access to research information

The ability of academic and research institutions to access information is by far the biggest obstacle to research in South Sudan.

The biggest challenge facing researchers in accessing online information is the lack of computers, internet and reliable mobile phone technology that could enable tablets and smartphones to get online. There is a severe shortage of computers and the few available, for example, at the University of Juba, are at the ratio of almost one to 40 students. Furthermore, even when equipment is available and some internet access is available, the bandwidth for data transfer is often unreliable, especially for large documents.

Universities do not regularly publish journals and libraries are nearly barren, only sparsely stocked with old, often out of date, books and journals, without access to online sources due to internet connectivity issues or subscriptions. This means that students and researchers in academic institutions or policy research centres have to rely on foreign researchers, or on relatives and colleagues who live abroad and who are able to haul huge amounts of reading material on their return home. This does not mean that people entirely lack access to information: Internet cafes do exist, but often at a prohibitively high cost. Students and researchers often access information using smartphones and tablets, but this means that research is an individual investment. The exception is in the case of researchers who work for donor agencies or are affiliated with foreign researchers.

For funded research projects, the cost of communication and the use of online resources can add up to a significant part of the budget needing careful itemizing in the budget narrative and justification: this requires researchers who are seasoned enough to foresee this when they are applying for funding.

As a result of its long-running conflict, South Sudan has long hosted a large number of international NGOs and even more indigenous NGOs and civil-society organizations. Both local and international organizations invest in the knowledge economy, with the local groups providing information on context, culture, politics and social issues and the internationals providing access to published information, training manuals, access to internet, information about websites and where to apply for funding.

Local organizations are split between advocacy groups and service provision NGOs. Whereas advocacy groups are often at odds with the government as they are more likely to criticize, NGOs are often on good terms with government, as they pick up services that the government has not been able to deliver on. This means both types of indigenous NGOs feed each other with information. It is often only through such collaboration that many local groups learn about what access is available to them. The level of awareness can be increased by opportunities to send staff abroad for refresher and in-depth courses on how to access information, raising the level of expertise for ICT staff, as more local organizations become conscious of the need to create and manage internet websites, if they are to have visibility among donors and among the constituencies that use their services.

Other NGOs and civil society groups benefit from employing South Sudanese who are returning from the diaspora, people who have lived in the western world, or had a chance to study in east Africa. These returnees can be a real asset in terms of brokering the translation of knowledge. They are also valuable in terms of navigating any cultural barriers between South Sudan and other countries.

Online or e-learning facilities are not widely in use in South Sudan, due to limited channels of subscription, narrow internet bandwidth and limited capability to download large documents. One way researchers and university staff and students have been able to access online material is through pre-loaded USB drives or computer discs brought to South Sudan through collaborative processes. Those research programmes collaborating with northern institutions may have access due to subscriptions arranged abroad. For example, the College of Medicine at the University of Juba is host to a collaborative programme with Harvard University-based Partners in Health of Paul Farmer and Jimmy Kim. They have a South Sudan – UK Hospital link, which allows for the publication of South Sudan Medical Journal.

4.1. ICT infrastructure

Internet connection has improved a great deal in South Sudan over the past few years, courtesy of V-Sats and mobile telecommunication companies. There are several private internet providers on the market and any private entity can acquire internet system but at a rather hefty fee.



Unfortunately, universities do not have functioning ICT facilities, even though the University of Juba has a computer science department. Rather, departments are often just teaching basics about hardware and programming, with very limited access to more advanced ICT systems. The only qualified ICT professor is at the University of Juba.

There are four mobile phone companies in the country, MTN, Gemtel, Vivacel and Zain, and they have all improved their connectivity and data use. But this is still subject to network interruption due to service, weather, time of day or overload by users. Social media is widely in use by young people, with phones having changed how people communicate. This has provided a great avenue for survey-based research, as samples can be selected and polling conducted using mobile phones.

5. Types of research and publication

5.1 Consultancy research

By far the most common type of research conducted in South Sudan is consultancy research for use by NGOs, major donors, the UN, the World Bank and to a certain degree for the government. Research by NGOs or civil society organizations are mainly project reports or baseline studies to establish the level of need when designing interventions. These interventions are usually in the fields of health, humanitarian need, food security, gender and sexual violence, the justice system, human rights and matters relating to the . Other types of research may be evaluation and monitoring reports.

5.2 Academic research

Much of the academic research that is taking place is by postgraduate students enrolled in European or North American universities. Other projects may be long-term research conducted by well-established academics who are based at Northern universities, sometimes in collaboration with local academics. Local academics often facilitate research for incoming expatriate academics who need logistical support, field researchers, translation and assistance with interviews. Through this, local research benefits in terms of capacity as well as funding and publication outlets.

5.3 Government research

As a country, South Sudan does not prioritize research or independent analysis. Major policy decisions have been made without the government doing their own research and analysis. The exception was a 2011 evaluation of government performance, led by the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs but conducted by academics and graduate students from within the country and abroad. The government had ordered the review and evaluation of its own performance, but then refused to publish the report, apparently because it showed the degree to which the government was dysfunctional.

Postgraduate qualifications are mostly undertaken at the Centre for Peace and Development studies; mainly in the fields of Gender Studies, Rural Development, Humanitarian Interventions and Peace. The academic programme has not been consistently in existence for long enough to provide concrete numbers. In the year 2014, the centre graduated only 16 students with Master's degrees. It is questionable whether their level of capacity, both in mastery of the English language and research methods, is adequate in order to contribute to research in the country.

5.4 Published literature base

South Sudan is overflowing with grey literature, most of it in the form of NGO or UN reports, working papers and conference proceedings; much of which is limited in circulation and only accessible in hard copy. The research that would qualify for publication in peer reviewed journals or books is limited to a few academics with connections abroad. Otherwise, there is plenty of research that is published abroad by foreign researchers. As for local researchers and their ability to publish in journals, this is limited. The University of Juba has sporadically published journals, in limited numbers of hard copies rather than online, and some of the research published has been done by local researchers. Research centres like Sudd Institute, Ebony Centre and the Rift Valley Institute publish much of their research on their websites and share them through mailing lists. Conference papers have also been made available in limited numbers but are only accessible within the country and abroad through personal contacts.



6. How research is used in policy and practice

In South Sudan national policy making by government institutions does not take advantage of available research material. The reasons for this disconnect between policy decisions and field and evidence-based analysis are due to a lack of awareness among many policy makers about available research products. It can be attributed to suspicions about research as a central component of public policy, as some public officials are often reluctant to accept the kind of criticism that contained in research. Public officials are also sometimes unable to read, understand or digest the research products; the level of capacity among even senior government officials can be limited.

There are some channels through which research products could be disseminated to policymakers. These include summaries for policymakers to read very quickly, and public presentations to initiate dialogue and comment.

This situation is slightly different with regards to the NGOs, especially indigenous ones which rely on proper understanding of their context. For them, research plays a central role in activities. Sometimes there may be clashes with government when NGOs use research critical of government policy when designing programmes.

This seeming aversion to criticism by the government is an obstacle to the use of research as a basis for public policy making. A country where constructive criticism is almost criminalized is not a place where research can easily benefit public policy making. This is detrimental to the ability of the country to move forward to where public policy is guided by evidence-based analysis.

7. Gendered Dimensions of Research

There are important gender dynamics and differentials with regards to women's participation as knowledge producers, supervisors or senior practitioners. While there is significant capacity among women, their representation in these fields remains quite low and not senior level. The reasons for this include the disadvantage that women and girls have in access to education, particularly higher education. For example, at university level, the gender ratio of women to men is one in five. There are many cultural dynamics barring girls from accessing school and from advancing in educational careers, including domestic factors. Families tend to invest more in boys; girls face early marriage; there is a lack of female role models in higher education.

This is beginning to change, as more girls attend community schools and move to big towns for high school. It is only be a matter of time before the number of university female students increases. However, this is an area of deficit for the whole country, as women make up over 51% of the population, and a country that neglects such a huge segment of its population can only have half the chance of succeeding as a whole.

The government of South Sudan has begun to address this disparity head on. The transitional constitution of South Sudan 2011 emphasized affirmative action programmes that demand at least 25% representation of women in every programme. However, the country has a long way to go in the drive for gender equity.

8. Concluding remarks

The policy, academic and scientific research currently being produced in South Sudan is limited. There are multiple challenges facing South Sudan in building a strong research system capable of producing quality outputs. The biggest obstacles to research in the country are the lack of skilled human resources; the limited access to computers and the internet, which in turn leads to poor access to online research or published peer reviewed journals.

Over the last 10 years, there has been substantial funding to research in South Sudan, but due to a lack of donor coordination, it is hard to quantify the amounts. It is also difficult to draw the line between 'regular' development aid and specific funding to for, or to strengthen, research.

Whilst the government is very clear about priority research themes, they do not invest much in research. That which they do support is kept in-house. There is very limited use of research by the government or policymakers, meaning that many nationally important decisions are made in a vacuum. Government is often suspicious of research, unwilling to accept criticism and unable to utilize research.

Donors have undue potential for influence over the research agenda and the discourse surrounding it, given that they are most often the funders. Much research done in the country is in the form of grey literature; consultancy reports,



programme-specific baseline and evaluative assessments produced and funded by foreign donors. This has been referred to as the “NGOization of academia”.

That academic research conducted within South Sudan is often done by foreign graduate students or established academics working in the global north. Once again this is externally funded, and the information included tends to leave the country with the researcher, and not become available for use in-country.

9. Further reading

South Sudan Development Plan 2011-13 and **South Sudan's Vision 2040**, both of which outline the priorities in development and knowledge generation. These are not online but can be obtained from any national ministry, the offices of the European Union or any diplomatic mission.

Every Ministry has a strategic plan, programme of action and vision and mission. These can be good sources of information on research or development plans.

All the major donors, USAID, DFID, EU, CIDA, Norway, Sweden, Australia Aid, maintain pages about South Sudan on their websites.

OECD, Clingendael in The Hague, African Development Bank, the World Bank are also good sources. Since the universities do not maintain reliable websites, they require a visit to campuses and request any published material they may have, such as bulletins of research agenda.

Local think tanks like the Sudd Institute and Ebony Centre have many useful publications on their websites.

Sources on donor funding:

- [Multi-donor evaluation of support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding activity in Southern Sudan since 2005: Collation and Analysis of Donor Contributions to Southern Sudan, 2005–2010](#)
- [Aiding the Peace A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005–2010](#)
- [When Peace is the Exception: Shifting the Donor Narrative in South Sudan. Clingendael, the Hague](#)



Political analysis

Jason Mosley

South Sudan emerged as a sovereign state in July 2011, six years after the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the government of Sudan, bringing more than two decades of civil war to a close. However, the fledgling state has enjoyed very little stability, and since December 2013 has been embroiled in a civil war of its own, as competing interests within the SPLM fractured ahead of elections due in mid-2015. Despite the room for political manoeuvre afforded by the CPA, between 2005 and 2011, many important modalities remained ambiguous or unresolved upon South Sudan's independence. These included significant questions about relations between Khartoum and Juba – most prominently the framework for managing exports of oil from South Sudanese oil fields through pipeline infrastructure controlled by Khartoum. This led quickly to tensions with Sudan, including clashes over control of the disputed territory of Abyei and over some oil fields near the border, and to a halt of most South Sudanese production for much of 2012. Relations with Khartoum were eventually smoothed over, and a fee agreed for transit through the pipeline, with exports resuming in 2013.

Moreover, dynamics within South Sudan have also undermined stability. After taking control of the governance structures of 'Southern Sudan' in 2005, reinforced by its overwhelming 2010 election victory, the SPLM did little work to develop a civilian agenda. Rather, having 'won the war', the SPLM continued to function as a 'big tent' for a range of competing elites and commanders. The SPLM's main ideologue had been its leader John Garang, who died in 2005 after the CPA was signed. Fractures within the rebel movement – which had previously produced a split in 1993 – had been papered over but not resolved. The SPLM had not developed a concrete political vision for South Sudan as a nation. Rather, the ruling party – with control over the levers of the state and its access to oil revenues and other rents (largely coming out of the multi-billion dollar international development and humanitarian aid machine which emerged after the CPA) – sought mainly to accommodate competing interests across the new country, or marginalise them. This competition had broken out into conflict even before independence, particularly after the 2010 elections, which produced winners and losers in the tussle for control of the country's state governments – particularly in the oil-producing region close to the Sudanese border. The SPLM's strategy was mainly to incorporate potential rival militias into the SPLA (now the national army).

The split within the SPLM and the SPLA in December 2013 emerged as rival elites sought to position themselves within the ruling party ahead of the 2015 elections. President Salva Kiir and elites supporting him made several moves during the course of 2013 to consolidate control over the SPLM's internal mechanisms, seeking to ensure his re-selection as SPLM leader, and thus in effect continued control over the state, given the parlous condition of opposition parties. In July 2013, he dismissed the entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar. This led to tension with both historically influential figures within the SPLM, and in particular with Machar, who was also manoeuvring to emerge as SPLM leader. Machar's faction of the SPLA had been at the core of the 1993 split. Competition between Kiir and Machar also took on ethnic overtones, between the Dinka (Kiir) and Nuer (Machar) – the two largest groups in South Sudan. Neither leader represents these groups, which are large and diverse. However, ethnic ties are useful for mobilisation, particularly in the context of conflict.

Kiir moved aggressively against Machar and other critics within the SPLM leadership in December 2013. Troops loyal to the president targeted ethnic Nuer troops in Juba in a massacre, after accusing Machar of plotting a coup. A group of senior SPLM figures was arrested, including most of Kiir's critics. Machar escaped Juba, and quickly mobilised troops in the north of the country. During 2014 and 2015 a series of battles took place, displacing more than 2.5 million (almost a quarter of the population), and triggering an ongoing humanitarian disaster. Machar emerged as a focal point for opposition to Kiir's faction of the SPLM, but has not been in control all opposition – this greatly complicated negotiations for a peace deal held under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in neighbouring Ethiopia, which dragged on while both Kiir's and Machar's factions continued military actions in order to establish facts on the ground that would reinforce their negotiating positions.

In August 2015, IGAD and external players (notably the United States, United Kingdom and Norway) pushed through a peace deal. Machar signed the deal in Addis Ababa, with the guarantors bringing the agreement to Juba for Kiir's signature several days later. Kiir brought a list of reservations to the meeting, but was pressured – by the United States in particular – to sign without them being considered. A monitoring and enforcement committee was formed by IGAD, which is overseeing the establishment of a unity government (including Machar as vice-president and others opposed to Kiir, who will remain president) by January 2016. Elections have been pushed back to 2018.

Politics in South Sudan remain dominated by access to rents. Disruptions to oil production since 2012, and a sharp slide in the oil price since mid-2014, have complicated and reduced the pool of resources which can be accessed



through the state. Humanitarian and development assistance will continue to provide some rents. Competition can be expected to continue, despite the peace agreement. Indeed, after signing the agreement, Kiir's administration announced plans to redraw state boundaries, increasing the number of states from 10 to 28. Given that the peace deal allocated control of state government positions along with setting out the framework for the national unity government, the prospect of redrawing the state landscape raises doubts about Kiir's commitment to the agreement. Nevertheless, in December 2015, the SPLM 'in opposition' began sending its advance team to Juba to prepare for participation in the unity government. Machar and other senior SPLM figures are due to follow in the coming weeks.

Prospects for political stability are thus fragile, at best. Compounding the country's challenges are the impacts of the conflict on human and food security across swathes of the country. Some 2.4 million face acute food insecurity (IPC phase 3 or 4), with 1.6 internally-displaced in northern states of Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile in particular need. Conditions are expected to deteriorate sharply in early 2016. All factions of the SPLM know that this creates a major impetus for continued international humanitarian engagement, and leverage this to resist political compromise. With elections pushed back, tensions may reduce somewhat, but competition and manoeuvring will continue, and renewed conflict remains a significant risk.

