



South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme (SSuDEMOP)

Report on Further Consensus Building Meeting for Civil Society and Leaders from Various Faith Based Institutions on Constitution Making Process in South Sudan

Held on 15th Feb 2023 at The Tukul

Introduction

In January 2023, civil society representative and other non-political stakeholder held consensus building meetings to deliberate on their engagement in the anticipated constitution making process as well as enhancing coordination among non-political stakeholders. During the consensus building meetings, there was a general agreement on the need and importance of working together and building stronger synergies as non-political stakeholders. However, the big question was “what are the best modalities for non-political stakeholders to work in collaboration and meaningfully engage in the constitution making process?” This question was raised in regard to the two major groups – faith-based institutions/groups and the academia.

Following the consensus building meeting held on 1st and 2nd February 2023, SSuDEMOP offered to seek support and host further conversation with leaders from faith-based groups/institutions. Considering that these institutions are well established and have existent structures, it was suggested that civil society actors need to further build consensus so as to understand how these institutions intend to engage in the constitution making process and agree on modalities of engage with civil society to facilitate effective participation of non-political stakeholders in the constitution making process.

The half-day meeting was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Bring together representatives from different faith-based groups/institutions to discuss modalities of engagement with civil society actors in the constitution making process.
2. Strengthen working relationship between civil society actors and faith-based groups/institutions.

Groups present were:

Seven faith-based groups/institutions were represented. Namely: Evangelical Presbyterian (EP), Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS), African Inland Church (AIC), Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCSS), Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC), Pentecostal Church of South Sudan (PCSS), and representatives from various CSOs.

Welcoming Remarks, By Merekaje Lorna,

Merekaje Lorna welcomed the participants and thanked them for their positive response to the meeting invitation. She then shared the meeting objectives with the participants and emphasized that the meeting was designed to bring together various faith-based leaders/institution to discuss ways to effectively contribute in the constitution making process (CMP). She reminded the participants that, the constitution making process requires collective engagement of all non-political actors such as faith-based group, women, youth and persons with disabilities (PWD) among others. Therefore, there's need to discuss ways of sustained collective engagement among non-political stakeholders.

She underscored the fact that faith-based groups/institutions represent the population and have access to the communities in all parts of the country. However, the big question is how can coordination and existing working relations between the civil society organizations and the faith-based groups/institutions be enhanced?

She recalled that in 2010 the civil society and faith-based institutions played a significant role in awakening the nation ahead of the Referendum for self-determination by organizing monthly campaign under the slogan “**yes for separation**” which helped to mobilize the citizens. This later resulted in South Sudan attaining independence.

Session One:

Objective of the meeting and brief background of the previous CSOs consensus building meetings on engagement in the constitution making process **By Kirinya,**

He welcomed the participants, provided brief highlights from the first consensus building meeting that took place on 19th January 2023 and was attended by few CSOs together with representatives of development partners. The meeting called for another consensus building conversation that was held on 1st and 2nd February 2023 which brought together more stakeholder from civil society, media, person with disabilities, academia, women groups, youth groups, faith-based group, private sector, professional association and university students. The meeting had the following five outcomes

1. An Ad-hoc team comprising of different stakeholders was form to facilitate the nomination process - receive credentials, short list and submit the final list of the nominees to R-NCRC and submit to the Ministry of Justice.
2. The non-political stakeholders proposed to organize a roundtable meeting to bring together development partner and representatives of non-political stakeholders to discussed better modalities of engagement and coordination of support to the CMP. A similar conversation is also being planned for security agencies.
3. The participant proposed “**Citizen Driven Constitution**” as the theme under which the non-political stakeholder group will engage in the constitution making process.
4. Focal point person was identified from non-political stakeholders present in the meeting on first and second February 2023 to facilitate easy communication with their constituency.
5. A suggestion was made to conduct mapping of non-political stakeholders for easy communication and coordination. A further suggestion was also made to include the participants of the consensus building into already existing WhatsApp group formed by civil society and other partners for purpose of CMP. There was a suggestion to use “South Sudan Constitutional Forum” which is an already an existent group.

Session Two:

This was a plenary session which gave the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and comments on the previous consensus building meetings. The following points were raised during the session.

1. There is need to include South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) as an entity to participate in the conversation and efforts towards the constitution making process.
2. It is important to have the right people to engage in the constitution making process.
3. It was suggested that efforts need to be made to reach out to other faith-based institutions so as to realize inclusion.
4. The participants acknowledged that church and faith-based institutions plays a very important role in bringing peace. This can be done through civic education and by awakening the leaders of the country.
5. 12 years since the country got independence the constitution is not adopted and the country continues to be governed under transitional constitution. Hence there's need to back up this process;
6. The faith-based institutions have the capability of reaching the grass root. Therefore, the needs for them to come together and combine efforts with other stakeholders so as to meaningfully contribute to the process.
7. The faith-based leaders requested that copies of the documents related to the civic education on the CMP be prepared and shared with them to provide harmonized information and material for civic education including copies of the Constitution Making Process Act 2022 and other legal documents.
8. The faith-based leaders also alluded to the need to work with the government and example have been seen in other countries such as Kenya with the **Ufungamano initiative**.

Session Two:

Discussion on modalities for Engagement in the Constitution Making Process

Facilitated by Abraham Deng

This session was designed to explore best modalities of engagement between civil society and faith-based institutions. This will facilitate further collective engagement in the constitution making process and with other stakeholders.

Below were questions raised to the faith-based leaders and was answered during the session for way forward session

1. How best can civil society engage with faith-based intuitions and what could be the best medium of communication?
 - Through email or telephone call to focal persons of different faith-groups
 - Through email or telephone call to the focal person representing faith-based groups/institutions - Already Bishop Dr. Zacharia Manyok Biar was identified from the previous consensus meeting held on 1st and 2nd February 2023 unless the faith-based institutions.

2. Inclusivity: who else is to be included from among faith-based groups and how can they be achieved bring them on board?
 - South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)
 - Islamic Council
 - Catholic Bishops Conference
 - Inter-religious council

3. How can the non-political stakeholders channel civic engagement information through the faith-based structures?
 - CSOs and faith-based personnel who have experience in civic engagement need to develop the materials together
 - Church leaders needs to be provided with more knowledge and materials in regards to the CMP.

4. What specific roles can the faith-based groups/institutions play,
 - Faith-based institutions together with CSOs and other non-political stakeholders need to plan logistic for dissemination of the materials and avail copies to faith-based institutions
 - The faith-based institutions can include the constitution making process as a prayer item in the intercessory prayer.

5. what are potential challenges and opportunities which may hamper or enhance engagement of faith-based groups/institutions in the CMP?

Challenge:

- Limited access to materials related to constitution making process.
- Most personnel in faith-based institutions may not be fully aware about the exact role they can play. This may hinder their effective participations in the process
- Absence of standardized messages for citizen mobilization, materials and funding in order to effectively engage in the civic education process.

Opportunities

- Therefore, the representatives of the faith-based institutions requested the civil society representatives to provide copies of the Constitution Making Process Act (CMPA) 2022, the Memorandum on Implementation of the CMPA 2022 and other necessary legal documents and facilitate a session for the faith-based leaders to fully under provisions of these documents.
- There are experiences from the region and in the country during the Referendum in 2010-11. Similar approach may be necessary.
- Existence of the South Sudan Civil Society Repository on CMP. See the **link below** <https://accessible-direction-463.notion.site/South-Sudan-Civil-Society-Repository-for-Constitution-Making-Process-5d0f2e19b58c4fa39c51a8282d91c24a>

Closing remarks by Merekaje Lorna

Merekaje thanked the participants for a fruitful and enlightening conversation. She stated that, this meeting was informative and the other participants will inform their constituencies of the discussions and hope this will strengthen working relations and coordination between faith-based institutions and other non-political stakeholders. She reminded the participants of the importance of the constitution making process and the need for collaboration among the non-political stakeholders. She committed to inform the rest of the colleagues from civil society who did not attend the meeting and hope to engage them in future processes. She also mentioned that SSuDEMOP will reach out to other civil society colleagues/organizations and development partners to explore the possibility of responding to some of the challenges identified above.

In her closing remarks, Merekaje indicated to the faith-based leaders that the non-political stakeholders are making efforts to engage with development partners and the security agencies so as to coordinate support and efforts towards the constitution making process. The faith-based leaders will be involved and represented in the future conversations. She thanked the Swiss for providing the space and snacks for the half-day meeting. She thanked Rt. Rev. Dr. Zechariah Manyok Biar and Rt. Rev. Emeritus. Peter Amadi as being the entry point to get all the faith-based leaders articulating the need for consensus and involvement of other faith-based leaders which resulted in hosting the half-day meeting.