

Sexual Violence as a Strategy of War:
Ending Conflict-related Sexual Violence in South Sudan
by Strengthening Accountability

Master's Thesis in
Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research
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Spring 2022

Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to investigate the use of sexual violence as a strategy of war in South Sudan, with a specific focus on the importance of accountability.

Method: The qualitative study was conducted with semi-structured interviews, where the interviewees were selected purposively and with snowball sampling.

Results: Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war in South Sudan. Root causes for the conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan included reasons such as a long history of conflicts, intergenerational traumas, patriarchal values, a culture of impunity, weapons of war, an inadequate criminal justice system, difficult inter-ethnic relations, a circle of revenge, and cattle trading. The services for the survivors are insufficient and unattainable. Perpetrators are not held accountable for their crimes, and South Sudan has a strong culture of impunity. Strengthening accountability needs to be based on factors from both retributive and restorative models, with a deference of local beliefs and traditions. Women's participation in peacebuilding in South Sudan is strong, yet women are not involved well enough in peace negotiations and implementation. The conflict is complex and multi-dimensional.

Conclusions: To end the sexual violence as a strategy of war in South Sudan, work on all levels of society is required. Strengthening accountability is hampered by huge obstacles, yet it is one of the most important aspects in ending the conflict-related sexual violence.

Key Words: Sexual violence, strategy of war, conflict-related sexual violence, war weapon, South Sudan, accountability, impunity, women in peacebuilding

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Aim of the Study	1
1.2 Overview	1
1.3 Weapon of War	6
1.3.1 The Sexed Theory	6
1.3.2 The Gendered Theory	6
1.4 Background to the Conflict in South Sudan	8
1.5 Sexual Violence as a Mechanism of War in South Sudan	9
1.6 Peace Brokering and Accountability	10
1.7 International and National Documents as Support	12
1.7.1 UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820	12
1.7.2 South Sudan Peace Agreements	13
1.7.3 Addressing Sexual Violence in Peace Negotiations	14
2. Method	16
2.1 Sample	16
2.2 Instrument	16
2.3 Procedure	16
2.4 Ethical Considerations	17
2.5 Research Questions	17
3. Results	18
3.1 Life in South Sudan – An Overview of the Interviewees’ Experiences	18
3.2 Sexual Violence in South Sudan	19
3.2.1 Culture of Silence	19
3.2.2 Prevalence, Place, and Types of Sexual Violence	20
3.2.3 Survivors and Perpetrators	22
3.2.3.1 Services for Survivors	25
3.2.4 Sexual Violence as a Strategy of War	28
3.2.4.1 Explaining the High Prevalence of Sexual Violence in South Sudan	30
3.3 Accountability	34
3.3.1 Challenges with Reporting	37
3.3.2 Seeking for Justice	37
3.4 The Future of South Sudan	42
3.4.1 Thoughts about the Government	42
3.4.2 Thoughts about the Future of South Sudan	46
4. Discussion	52
4.1 Summary of Findings	52
4.2 Limitations of the Study	54
4.3 Implications of the Study	54
4.4 Suggestions for Future Research	54
References	56

Appendix A

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Thesis

The aim of the study was to investigate sexual violence as a strategy of war, with a specific focus on the sexual violence used in the civil war of South Sudan. The study addresses the reasons why sexual violence is so prevalent in South Sudan, and whether it has been used there as a weapon of war. The available services for the survivors of sexual violence and the possible consequences for the perpetrators are discussed. The impunity in South Sudan is addressed by searching different ways to strengthen accountability. The civil war continues in South Sudan and to end the conflict, different approaches for the peacebuilding are brought up with the special focus on ending sexual violence as a weapon of war.

1.2 Overview

Previously, it was assumed that sexual violence is an inevitable and unfortunate part of conflicts and war, and that it happens as a by-product of war without any systematic plan or action. Nowadays it has been noticed that sexual violence during conflicts is not only a “co-incidence,” but potentially a strategy or tactic of war, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and a threat for international security (Cohen & Nordås, 2014). Specifically, the mass rapes during the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina brought the issue of sexual violence in conflicts into public attention (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013). In addition, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has brought much policy and media attention into the exact role that sexual violence plays in conflicts.

Sexual violence during the conflicts has turned into a global security problem, which United Nations, among other international organizations, has acknowledged and started to combat against. Wars are being fought on and over the bodies of women by forcibly controlling their reproduction and severely violating women in various ways. Research shows that sexual violence most likely occurs in all conflicts, yet there are differences in form and severity (Cohen & Nordås, 2014). There are many different theories and reasons that explain events of rape and other sexual violence during the conflicts, and why using sexual violence is systematic instead of coincidental. Understanding the structure and system behind rape, or any other kind of sexual violence, during the war gives particular meanings to the perpetrators and to the survivors. Emphasizing the harms of rape and bringing more attention to the wartime rapes are crucial in order to prevent these horrifying acts of happening in current or future wars. It may also help victims to get the help and support they need.

Therefore, the stories need to be told and heard repeatedly to remind the public, governments and the international communities that wartime sexual violence is strategic, and especially that sexual violence during a war is not normal. Furthermore, sexual violence during the conflicts should be prevented from continuing to the post-conflict times. The relation between sexual violence and the conflict is important to understand for the sake of effective conflict-resolution and for the purpose of justice.

This thesis concentrates on the sexual violence as a strategy of war as a concept: what is it, why it happens and what could be done to prevent it from happening. The specific focus area in the research is South Sudan, the nation that became independent in 2011 and where the civil war between Dinka, Nuer, and several other tribes and parties broke out in 2013, predisposing millions of women and girls for sexual violence among other horrors. Furthermore, the importance of accountability is discussed with the future of South Sudan in mind, and possible elements that could be used to strengthen the accountability are suggested. As part of the research, ten people who have been working in diverse positions in South Sudan were interviewed. These interviewees represent different international organizations and institutes.

Sexual violence as a weapon of war is a complex issue. There is no agreed definition of the term ‘weapon of war,’ so in order for it to differ from regular sexual violence during a war, certain characteristics need to be fulfilled. First, the term ‘conflict-related sexual violence’ means sexual violence against women, girls, men or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. The link may be visible in the profile of the perpetrator (often enlisted as part of an armed group or network), the profile of the victim (often a member of a persecuted ethnic, political, or religious minority, or a person who is targeted because of gender identity or sexual orientation). In addition, the atmosphere of impunity (which is often present when a state collapses), cross-border consequences (trafficking or displacement of people), and/or violations of the regulations in the ceasefire agreement are characteristics accustomed to conflict-related sexual violence (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts, 2017).

Weapon of war as a term “*demonstrates a practice of shared belief and ideas*” (Skjelsbæk, 2001: 213). According to the Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, weapon is defined as 1) any instrument or device for the use in attack or defense in combat, fighting or war, as a sword, rifle, cannon etc., 2) anything used against an opponent, adversary, or victim, or 3) any part of organ serving for attack or defense, as claws, horn, teeth, stings, etc. Yet, “*not all weapons in the conventional sense will be weapons of war, and not all weapons of war will be conventional weapons*” (Skjelsbæk, 2001: 213). Some other examples of

non-conventional weapons of war can be attacks on food or medical security, and the use of media as a propaganda. To be called a ‘weapon of war,’ both conventional and un-conventional weapons need to be *“used as a part of a systematic political campaign which has strategic military purposes”* (Skjelsbæk, 2001: 213). The definitions in different studies slightly diverge from one another, yet usually these additional four points need to be fulfilled in events of sexual violence in order for them to be called a weapon of war: 1) strategy, 2) gender, 3) culpability, and 4) avoidability (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013). However, these four points do not necessarily weigh equally in the events.

When soldiers use sexual violence in a war, they target the men of the enemy nation even though the victims of sexual violence are most often women. Thus, it could be said that the wars are fought over women’s bodies. By attacking women, the whole family and community suffer. *“Rape is used as a weapon to weaken the fabrics of communities that women work so hard to uphold so that armed forces can better exert their control”* (Feeley & Thomas-Jensen, 2008: 6). Women’s daily activities, which are linked to the economy (collecting water, going to the markets, gathering firewood etc.), become hindered by fear and sexual violence. Despite this, women are those who carry the main responsibility for taking care of the family.

Sexual violence as a war weapon is cheap and effective. It is used as a strategy to terrorize, degrade, shame, and humiliate both the victims and the ethnic or political group that they belong to (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Sexual violence in conflict situations is considered a traumatizing event for women with physical, psychological, and social consequences. Feelings such as guilt, shame and fear are prevalent afterwards and often for a long period of time, if not for the rest of the survivor’s life. Physical problems such as cuts and scars, broken bones, lingering pains, stomach cramps, difficulties with urinating, passing stool, internal wounds, damaged reproductive organs, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS are common for the victims of sexual violence (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017).

Sexual violence in wars shows in many ways. However, the most common type of sexual violence in a war is rape. Raping an enemy is an effective and powerful tool to gain and show power over them as well as to humiliate and intimidate them (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2013). Women can be raped as a punishment for being seditious. Sometimes rape is used to break the construction in a society as raping a woman can lead to her becoming rejected by her husband/family or making her viewed as an unsuitable for marriage. Women being feminine is commonly thought of as a sign of being weak, whereas being masculine is regarded as being strong. Sometimes men are raped in a war to make them look feminine and therefore weak, as a way to

humiliate them. Another way to “feminize” the enemy is to rape all the women to make their men feel embarrassed and failed for not being able to protect their women, which is often seen as a strong part of masculinity.

Women of the enemy nation are also raped and killed during the war as a ‘prize’ for the victors. It is then considered an enjoyable, exciting reward and a part of exhibiting nationalism. Here men get pride and enjoyment for gaining power and control over the enemy women, similarly to events hundreds of years ago when women were raped in a war as a symbol for conquering a foreign country (Sackellares, 2005). This sort of rape does not necessarily happen as a direct strategy of war, as the main motive behind this rape is to satisfy oneself, not to hurt the enemy even though it certainly works in that way as well. However, the same ideology of “hyper-masculinity” is based on this type of sexual abuse, as in every other kind of sexual violence (Luedke & Loga, 2017).

One of the reasons for rape as a mechanism of war is ethnic cleansing. Women are raped to procreate a new race and often even sterilized so that they cannot keep up their own race (Sackellares, 2005). When it happens systematically, the aim of the perpetrators is to eliminate an entire ethnic group by humiliating and separating women and men of that same culture. As mentioned earlier, women are sometimes rejected by their husbands after the rape, which in this case helps the ethnic cleansing that the enemy fights for to happen.

Some argue that the main motive for mass raping women in a war is the culturally rooted contempt for women (Sackellares, 2005). Violence, control, and dominance over women are factors that keep up the social order of women’s subordinate position and patriarchy. Furthermore, the rooted contempt for women explains well why it is easier for men to reject their wives after being raped by the enemy men. The whole sexual violence, as all kind of violence against women, is embedded in the underlying structures such as (gender) inequality, gender discrimination, and the neglect of the rights of minorities (United Nations Security Council, 2018).

Another type of using sexual violence in a war is to force an enemy to rape their own kins (daughters, mothers, wives), often under a threat to be killed. Gang rapes, sexual slavery, and castration are common types as well (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Being dragged from genitals with an electric cord in public is a used method (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013). Genital mutilation or torture, and forced nakedness are widespread types of sexual violence (Skjelsbaek, 2001). Additionally, women’s breasts have been cut off, vaginas have been forcibly penetrated with foreign objects, such as sticks, broken bottles, and weapons, and the stomachs of pregnant women have been sliced open to torture the woman and to kill the fetus (Sackellares, 2005). Often the sexual violence is followed by other types of violence, sometimes even by killings. In addition,

sexual violence can be psychological, such as threatening someone with the sexual violence, or forcing someone to watch their kins to be raped in front of them.

Sexual violence in any form is a taboo all over the world, yet it is still more prevalent in some cultures than in others. The culture of silence among the South Sudanese is highly present when it comes to sexual violence. The *“personal experiences of sexual violence are kept private, and society has limited cultural forums or public opportunities to talk about, remember or commemorate women’s experiences”* (Tankink, 2013: 394). A few reasons for women staying silent about the sexually violent events are mentioned: the fear of exclusion from the family and/or community, feelings of shame, an attempt to avoid the gossips, and the use of ‘staying silent’ as a coping mechanism. Getting excluded from the community may not always mean a physical exclusion, but instead *“a loss of community respect, strong disapproval and, above all, not being taken seriously – directly or indirectly”* (Tankink, 2013: 396). An exclusion process gets its fuel from gossiping. In South Sudan, women are often dependent on men for protection and economic support. These women are afraid of losing that support if they speak out about their experiences of sexual violence. Choosing to stay silent is a voluntary but oppressed choice, yet sometimes staying silent can also be a direct command or threat.

Feelings of shame are strongly present in any kind of sexual violence in South Sudan, particularly in the victim, not necessarily in the perpetrator. However, women who have been victims of sexual violence do not carry guilt among themselves even though they feel shame. According to Tankink (2013), shame comes from cultural or social values whereas guilt comes from internal values. These women did not feel guilty because they knew they were not doing anything wrong, and they knew that experiencing sexual violence was out of their control. Being regarded as a shameful woman is seen as a social death, and therefore South Sudanese women rather stay silent about their experiences than seek help for the problems that the sexual violence has caused. Being part of a community and family is considered more important than health. Thus, South Sudanese women stay silent to protect themselves and cope.

In addition, the lack of reporting about sexual violence or other crimes is also linked to the concrete difficulties to get to the court. The few formal courts that are functioning are mainly based in urban areas of South Sudan, and for most people traveling there is too dangerous, expensive, and time-consuming (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of belief and confidence in the legal system and judicial officials is the main obstacle for many victims of sexual violence. The challenges can be seen in other types of services for the survivors. Help is mostly accessible in ‘Protection of Civilians’ (POC) sites or close to Juba, leaving most South Sudanese without help

(Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts, 2017).

1.3 Weapon of War

Talking about conflict-related sexual violence as a weapon of war gives more knowledge and understanding about wartime sexual violence, as well as ways to tackle and prevent it. Why does it happen? Does wartime sexual violence increase because of the incentive to engage in it, or because of the opportunity to do so? Two different theories based on biology and sociology are further discussed and compared.

1.3.1 The Sexed Theory

According to sexed theory, rape during a war is explained through (hetero)sexual urge and substitution (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013). The theory claims that men soldiers have biologically driven sexual needs that require an outlet. Usually soldiers' girlfriends/wives are left home to take care of the family and the house, and men have no chance to fulfill their biological needs in a "normal" way, thus men need to go and rape any women they meet during the battle. According to this theory, the gender roles are very prefigured by biology, emphasizing that male heterosexuality is a natural force that men are subjected to follow, and women are the silent victims that need to obey men's biology (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013).

This is a very dangerous theory to rely on, as it gives the soldiers the right to rape as it sounds like the rape is inevitable and a way of survival. It also leaves the victims of rape in silence; hence, the sympathy is directed more towards the 'poor soldiers' who cannot help but rape. According to the theory, the military is a special place separate from home and therefore separate from normal settings, from civilization. This gives soldiers a right to act differently while being in the military because the society does not temper their sexual urges there. Men are free to become beasts. Thus, every man is a potential rapist when the situation allows it.

The theory does not explain why some soldier groups rape in conflicts, whereas others do not. Moreover, rape is commonly categorized to be a crime about power, not about sex, as the purpose for the perpetrator is to gain and show power over someone else. Furthermore, sexed theory does not support the fact that rape is used as a mechanism of war, because in this theory, rape is not systematic nor strategic.

1.3.2 The Gendered Theory

In the gendered theory, the focus is on militarization and gender. During the military training, men (and women) go through specifically built training that creates violent and ‘masculine’ soldiers, who are able (and willing) to kill in order to protect their own state (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013). In the military, being highly masculine is considered the ideal way for a soldier to be. Furthermore, masculinity in the military is viewed in an extremely narrow and old-fashioned way as it is built up with features such as physical strength, violence, heterosexuality, domination, and obedience of orders. Nowadays, these features are regarded as ‘toxic masculinity.’ In a military setting, femininity again is associated with weakness, peacefulness and life-giving – features that are seen as disturbing in the military, and specifically in a war.

As the aim of a military training is to prepare soldiers to protect, combat and kill in a war, these ‘feminine’ features are trained to keep out of a soldier’s mind and behavior. Thus, militarization is a process where men (and women) are breaking down their feminine identity through humiliation and building up their macho soldier identity instead. Keeping up this kind of identity requires constant work. Living up to the expectations of being a certain identity is impossible. When a soldier feels that he is not fulfilling the expectations and is “failing his masculinity”, rape functions as a way to regain that masculinity and power (Eriksson, Baaz & Stern, 2013).

The same logic can be seen in every kind of violence against women and girls. The gender roles are set too narrow; men are expected to be only masculine and women only feminine. Men are expected to protect and dominate women, and women are expected to be protected and submissive. When these two expectations do not come true, men use violence against women to lift themselves up while putting women down. In today’s society, the gender roles are changing and more diverse, yet in the military world, these roles tend to remain more traditional. As using violence against women is an effective and powerful tool to suppress and violate women in a general society, it is then an effective and powerful tool in a war as well.

It is important to notice the difference between sex and gender in these theories. Sex is the attribute one is born with and it is determined by biology, while gender is the learned attribute that is determined mostly by society. Being feminine or masculine is a feature of gender. Therefore, sexed rape and gendered rape are two different entities. In both theories, the perpetrator is viewed as masculine and the victim as feminine. Yet in sexed story, this means that men exclusively rape women. According to gendered theory, a masculine perpetrator is usually a man but can also be a woman, and the feminine victim is most often a woman but can also be a man, who has been “feminized” by rape. This also shows that sexed theory is extremely negative towards men, putting

the blame on biology and giving a picture that every man is a potential rapist. Gendered theory suggests that when masculinity is seen and built in a violent and toxic way, similarly to the way that militaries do, it creates a risk for a sexual violence. If masculinity was seen and embraced differently, in a peaceful way, sexual violence might actually in some cases disappear.

1.4 Background to the Conflict in South Sudan

South Sudan has a history with conflicts all the way since the end of the 1950s. During the first conflicts, there were armed resistance groups in South Sudan fighting against the north. Sudan wanted to keep the British and Catholic influences outside the state and instead, it declared that the official language of the government is Arabic and the official day of rest is Friday. This led to a stronger resistance towards the north, and the civil war started and continued until 1972, when the southern part of Sudan was promised autonomy by the peace agreements. The civil war broke out soon again, and this time, it lasted until 2005, when the north and the south signed a new peace agreement. During this war, there were not only conflicts between the south and the north, but also conflicts between the tribes Dinka and Nuer (Tankink, 2013).

South Sudan became an independent state in July 2011 after seceding from Sudan. Soon after this there started to be political tensions between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, which escalated to an internal armed conflict after President Kiir dismissed Machar. The government forces started killing Nuer people based on their ethnicity and political views. Security forces split into a group that wanted to stay loyal to the government and President Kiir, and into an armed opposition group under Machar that was called “Sudan People’s Liberation Movement” (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017).

After multiple peace negotiations, both parties with several stakeholders finally signed the ‘Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan’ (ARCSS) in August 2015. Through the agreement, the “Transitional Government of National Unity” (TGoNU) could be formed, national elections were planned to be held in two and a half years, and the need for strengthening areas with security, justice and a sound constitutional development was taken into consideration. However, the implementation of the ARCSS was slow and failed to end the fighting inside the country. In April 2016, Machar was sworn in as the First Vice President and TGoNU was finally formed, yet other parts of the agreement remained unimplemented and tensions between the government and the opposition forces kept rising. In July 2016, government soldiers committed plenty of serious violations of the international human rights law by killing and attacking civilians, using sexual violence, and looting property. Soon after this, Kiir dismissed Machar again and

replaced him with Taban Deng Gai. In 2017, the peace negotiations continued, and a new peace agreement was signed in September 2018. After two years, *“the unity government has been formed but the creation of a unified security force is still incomplete and the peace deal signatories continue to perpetrate serious human rights abuses”* (Oxford Analytica, 2020: 1). The agreement has formally held but the implementation is weak. Some of the conflicts have ended, especially between the conventional armed forces, yet the intercommunal violence has increased tremendously. *“According to the UN, violent incidents in the first half of 2020 increased by 133% compared to last year, while the number of victims rose by 150%”* (Oxford Analytica, 2020: 1).

Since the start of the internal conflict in Juba, in 2013, thousands of women, men and children in South Sudan have experienced sexual violence such as rape, gang rape, sexual mutilation and torture, sexual slavery, castration, or forced nudity (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). The prevalence of the sexual violence varies in different areas of South Sudan, and the exact amount of victims is impossible to know. However, the available statistics are remarkably high, for example, 72% of the women living in Juba have reported to have been raped, predominantly by soldiers and police (United Nations Population Fund, 2015). As the conflict persists, the amount of victims keeps rising. The brutality of sexual violence has strong impacts (psychological, physical, and social) both at the individual and at the community level, passing on the trauma from one generation to another. As Madutjok (1999) states, women’s reproductive roles have become a national matter for debate.

1.5 Sexual Violence as a Mechanism of War in South Sudan

There is no doubt that sexual violence in the conflicts of South Sudan has been brutal and prevalent. Actually, *“nowhere is this more apparent than in South Sudan”* (Luedke & Logan, 2017: 100). However, collected data may not always show the exact truth when it comes to the subject of sexual violence. First, different studies come from researchers from different countries where the definitions and laws about sexual violence may differ a lot from each other. For example, in some countries, rape requires a forcible compulsion to be considered rape, and the lack of consent is not necessarily enough. Moreover, coerced vaginal penetration is not considered rape in some societies even though it is regarded as a criminalized action. Second, sexual violence is a sensitive subject, which is why many of the victims or witnesses are not comfortable enough to report about it. Lot of victims are feeling shame or are in fear of stigmatization if they report. Sometimes the events are so traumatizing that the victim of sexual violence is not capable of speaking about it, especially if help or support is not offered afterwards. The fear of possible punishments or revenging violence is often

so strong that the victims feel safer by staying silent – especially if there is no trust in the community’s juridical and political factors. The fear of reprisal for reporting is also higher in war settings, especially if the perpetrator is still present (Wood, 2006).

Reasons why sexual violence is so prevalent in South Sudan can be seen in the country’s gender dynamics. Other adequate reasons are the long-lasting war with the inter-generational unhealed traumas and the difficult inter-ethnic relations, as well as the inadequate criminal justice system with the lack of accountability. Furthermore, *“the structural violence connected to the local political economy of bride wealth and the commodification of feminine identities and bodies”* are often forgotten causes of the sexual violence in South Sudan (Luedke & Logan, 2017: 112). The gendered theory fits well with the South Sudanese culture where women and girls are viewed as subordinate to men and boys, and where the gender discrimination is part of everyday life. *“It is also motivated by patriarchal structures and gendered concepts of power which position men as ‘protectors’ of women”* (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017: 18). Moreover, this kind of violent relationship between men and women comes from *“conditioning of young men to violence, war-provoked emphasis on procreation, social reproduction of violence in communities, and soldiers’ consumption of alcohol that leads to sexual demands and violence”* (Madutjok, 1999: 1). Sexual violence in general is often tolerated, and domestic violence is mostly considered a private matter. The stigma and shame around the sexual violence push the victims to stay silent about the violent events.

Crimes are seldom taken to formal courts. Instead, they are settled in the customary courts that are not suitable for women in events of sexual violence. Cases and testimonials are usually heard in public, presided over by the male-dominated panels of chiefs and elders, and the crimes are usually solved through the compensation and reconciliation instead of the punishment (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Rape is often resolved through payments directly to the victim or to the family, and the harm that the perpetrator has caused to the victim is not recognized. In the customary courts, the rapist may also be recommended to marry the victim.

1.6 Peace Brokering and Accountability

The reason why sexual violence has kept on for so long in South Sudan is the culture of impunity and the lack of accountability. According to the South Sudan’s criminal justice system, sexual violence is not counted as crimes against humanity, torture or genocide and cannot be prosecuted in South Sudan in these ways (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Still, sexual violence is a crime under South Sudan’s Penal Code. The implementation and enforcement of the laws are inadequate,

and “*South Sudanese authorities have repeatedly failed to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into crimes of sexual violence or to hold those responsible to account in fair trials*” (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017: 47). These defects are consequences of the poor criminal justice system and lack of the criminal accountability and political commitment.

An effective way to tackle sexual violence in conflicts, or anywhere, is strengthening the accountability while fighting against the impunity. Impunity indeed is one of the main reasons why sexual violence keeps happening during the conflicts. When corruption is high inside the country, especially among those who work within the justice system, the culture of impunity keeps going as no one is there to control it.

Survivors of sexual violence in South Sudan want the perpetrators to be held accountable in order to get the country repaired, as well as to make the social fractures that cause and result sexual violence visible (Amnesty International Ltd, 2017). Some felt that holding the perpetrators responsible and punished would be the only way to break the circle of revenge and violence, to strengthen the community feeling among different tribes and groups, and to secure a peaceful future for the country. However, the hope for seeing justice is poor among South Sudanese.

Getting those, who are mainly responsible for the atrocities in South Sudan, to the peace negotiations is difficult as they are afraid to be held responsible and thus, prosecuted for their crimes against human rights. They are ready to continue killing and violating human rights to stay in power as they are afraid that once removed from power, they will face retaliation at home and war crime trials abroad (Darehshori, 2009). This fear of accountability keeps South Sudan away from peace. In similar situations, blanket amnesties have been offered for those that are responsible for the crimes in order to get the conflict to end. This may end the current conflicts, yet justice does not come through. However, there are many who support the peace strategy that involves amnesties, and ‘forgiving and forgetting’ thematic (Darehshori, 2009). Sometimes giving amnesty has not been all that was granted for the war criminals, but some have been given new job positions in the government as well.

Peace that is built on top of impunity is not sustainable. It also encourages new abuses and atrocities to take place in the future. There are several examples from the war-set countries, such as from Sierra Leone and Angola, where the peace was built by amnestying the war criminals. In both countries, the conflicts continued soon after the peace agreements had been signed. “*The precedent of impunity meant that would-be criminals had no reason to curtail their unlawful tactics going forward*” (Darehshori, 2009: 4).

Women often carry the worst consequences of the conflicts and hold the best understanding of the importance of peace. South Sudanese women have a strong experience in resolving past conflicts in South Sudan, their peace-building activities strengthen the healing and reconciliation as women are skillful in creating bridges between divides. Women needs to be included equally because war impacts differently on women and men which is why their needs and priorities in peacebuilding differ from each other, and just because *“it is a constitutional right and an international obligation that women participate in peace-building activities”* (Mai, 2015: 1). That is why they should be involved in every step of building peace and enhancing the justice system. In addition, listening to the locals in the peace-making process, is important in the sense of culturally sensitive decisions considering justice and accountability. The Western-like retributive justice approach is not always suitable for non-Western societies (Aroussi, 2011).

1.7 International and National Documents as Support

1.7.1 UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820

In armed conflicts and wars where the sexual violence has been a prevailing feature during the wartime, the negotiated peace agreements seldom address the issue of sexual violence on their discussions nor conclusions (Jenkins & Goetz, 2010). The most salient document to enhance the discussion about conflict-related sexual violence in peace negotiations and agreements comes from the United Nations, that have officially judged the use of sexual violence as a war weapon. The Security Council has adopted the UN Resolution 1325 called “Women, Peace and Security”, which is a specific resolution focused on women’s role in conflicts and wars. As an addition, several other resolutions have been created to complement the Resolution 1325, out of which Resolution 1820 was published with the purpose of ending the conflict-related sexual violence.

In addition to the general suggestions about the wartime sexual violence for the UN member states, Resolution 1820 discusses several points that should be taken in consideration specifically in the peace negotiations and agreements. First, in general everyone should acknowledge and admit the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and highlight that despite the previous efforts in ending sexual violence in wars, the violence still occurs and it has become even more systematic, widespread, and brutal. Women should be equally participated and fully involved in the work among peace and security, women’s role in decision-making should be increased when it comes to conflict prevention and resolution. It is also important to acknowledge violence, intimidation, and

discrimination towards women when they are involved in peacebuilding, and the negative effect of it on durable peace, security and reconciliation (Security Council Resolution 1820).

For accountability, Resolution 1820 reminds that the main responsibility for ensuring human rights belongs to the States, and the main responsibility for ensuring the protection of civilians stays with the conflicting parties. It is crucial to note, that *“rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”* (Security Council Resolution 1820, cl. 4). The importance of prosecuting persons that are responsible for using or allowing sexual violence in a war is highlighted, as well as that ending impunity gives a chance for creating a durable peace, justice, and reconciliation. It is important to take the culture, state-specific laws, and regimes into account when sanctions are re-newed or established for the perpetrators (Security Council Resolution 1820).

Training peacekeepers and other UN officials who work at the conflict settings is important in order to better *“prevent, recognize and respond to sexual violence”* that is used against the civilians (Security Council Resolution 1820, cl. 6). Such trainings should be also for the nation’s army and police officers for them to be more aware about the sexual violence in both conflict and post-conflict settings. More employing of women officers is needed.

The Resolution 1820 emphasizes that the work against sexual violence needs to be strategic. When planning these strategies, nations must include women and women-led organizations in this work to create functional mechanisms to fight against the sexual violence. In order to ensure that these strategies will be completed and implemented properly, there has to be women in decision-making positions. Similar procedures are recommended for the post-conflict peacebuilding strategies to address sexual violence that has been used during and in the aftermath of armed conflict together with the country-specific configurations.

Finally, the Resolution 1820 encourages to support financially the national institutions such as judicial and health care systems in order to offer appropriate help for the victims of sexual violence (both during and after the armed conflict). It is also important to collect reliable data about the sexual violence with an analysis, and to make a report about it. Furthermore, to follow up the implementation of the strategies and constantly to develop those, is helping the nations to stay actively seized of the issue of sexual violence.

1.7.2 South Sudan Peace Agreements

There have been several different peace agreements in South Sudan’s history. Even though none of the agreements have been successful in creating peace in South Sudan, these agreements have

brought the process forward. Transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation, and healing are discussed, and women's crucial role in these are taken into account but not well enough (Women's Monthly Forum, 2016).

In the peace agreement from 2015, there were few concrete steps for the transitional justice process. By establishing the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) it was required that the experiences of the victims, with an emphasis on female victims, needed to be recorded. In addition, CTRH needs to ensure the protection for these victims, especially for the women witnesses (Women's Monthly Forum, 2016). Another institution with the transitional justice process was establishing the Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS). The HCSS is *“an independent judicial body that will have jurisdiction to prosecute serious crimes under international law and relevant laws of South Sudan, including gender-based crimes and sexual violence”* (Women's Monthly Forum, 2016: 10). In HCSS it would be important to have women judges, yet the exact percentage or number of these judges are not set in the agreement. Third institution with the transitional justice is to create a Compensation and Reparation Fund to provide support for those South Sudanese, whose property was destroyed during the conflict (Women's Monthly Forum, 2016). This Fund is focused on material and financial support only for the lost properties yet the compensation for the physically and psychologically violated war survivors are not discussed.

The peace agreement from 2015 has set the gender equality and women's participation as the major purpose for the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) and the Constitution (Women's Monthly Forum, 2016). These goals were not fulfilled as supposed to, which is why stricter and more detailed agreements were written down on the next Peace Agreement in September 2018. On this Peace Agreement the process of creating and implementing different institutions for transitional justice were continued with the mention of having 35% representation of women as appointed personnel (Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), 2018). Guidelines for the appropriate treatment for the perpetrators and the victims of the violence are set yet mentioning of sexual violence is limited. Hybrid Court of South Sudan (HCSS) is ought to have a jurisdiction for the genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and *“other serious crimes under international law and relevant laws of the Republic of South Sudan including gender-based crimes and sexual violence”* (Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), 2018: 62).

The recommendations for South Sudan from the African Union in 2014 were focused on creating accountability and recognizing the human rights violations in South Sudan (AU Commission of

Inquiry on South Sudan, 2014). Rape and sexual violence in general were discussed yet there was no mention of sexual violence as a war weapon.

1.7.3 Addressing Sexual Violence in Peace Negotiations

Including sexual violence in the mediated peace negotiations has multiple benefits yet remains still as a rarely discussed topic in peace talks (Jenkins & Goetz, 2010). Reasons behind the lack of discussion is most often the denial or downgrading of the issue, or a mutually agreed silence in order to protect the perpetrators and those who carry the responsibility of the violations. Furthermore, sexual violence is often viewed as ‘an invisible crime’, that is *“surrounded by social taboos and stigma and therefore raising it in a peace-making context, [is] very difficult”* (Aroussi, 2011: 586). Specifically, it is the absence of women in the peace negotiation tables that often makes the silence possible. In the peace negotiation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were no single woman in negotiation teams, even though the sexual violence towards women and girl during the war was internationally recognized (United Nations Publication, 2002). This proves how systematically women are excluded from the peace negotiations, and thus, the participation of women needs to be pushed twice as hard. Additionally, the impact of the UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820 have not been effective enough with these recommendations and *“has not led so far to the inclusion of real commitments to justice for women in peace agreement”* (Aroussi, 2011: 578).

In peace negotiations, the topic of sexual violence needs to be discussed for several reasons. To get the perpetrators or their commanders held accountable for their criminal actions, to ensure the survivors of sexual violence will get the compensation they need, to prevent the sexual violence continuing on post-conflict times, and to show the international communities and especially those in conflicts that sexual violence is not acceptable and not part of a war. It is important to bring up if sexual violence has been used as a war weapon to give more accurate picture of the conflict’s character, as well as to get a better understanding of the acts of perpetrators and the experiences of victims for these particular violations. Often sexual violence is described in other words, or as part of other crimes as sexual violence itself. Rape discussed only as a war weapon, genocide, gender disaster or as other metaphor without the mention of word “rape” itself, is not a solution for the problem (Ylänkö, 2009).

Often transitional justice processes focus too much on sentencing the perpetrators and not enough on the survivors of sexual violence, who *“continue to suffer from the consequences of the violence even when perpetrators are successfully caught and punished”* (Aroussi, 2011: 580). Women and girls, who are suffering the long-term consequences after being sexually violated,

should receive the medical treatment and psychological help they need. This is an important aspect to include in peace agreements when thinking about the post-conflict time and future of South Sudan. Compensations can be paid by South Sudan's State as it is obligated to do so under international law (United Nations Publication, 2002). Another possibility to get compensation is to govern the perpetrators of the offenses to pay to the victims. Further to ensure the security for the victims of sexual violence, is to offer an effective protection plan after one has reported about the crime. This needs to be included in the peace agreement.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

Ten persons were interviewed, seven of them were of Finnish nationality and three of other nationalities. All respondents had been working in South Sudan in different organizations, companies or operations on humanitarian, security or peace-related issues. The selected interviewees were both females and males of different ages, religions, and ethnic groups. Due to confidentiality reasons, other nationalities or details about the subjects are not disclosed. The interviewees did not receive any compensation and they all participated voluntarily.

They were found and contacted through different peace organizations and UN agencies. Some of the interviewees' contact information was received from other interviewees as recommendations. South Sudanese subjects were not interviewed since it was assumed that they might not hold neutral opinions about the issue, due to the severity of the internal conflicts in the country. Survivors of sexual violence were not interviewed since it would have required obtaining ethical consent from authorities. It was furthermore expected that interviewing South Sudanese survivors would have required a more therapeutic approach, and possibly debriefing after discussing about traumatic events. One of the interviews was made with a South Sudanese professional, who was working for a peaceful future in South Sudan.

2.2 Instrument

The interviews were semi-structured, and the same questionnaire was used for all the interviews. The interview scheme (Appendix A) consisted of nine questions. Two questions (no. 10 and 11) were added later when some of the interviews were already carried out. Clarifying explanations were used when needed. The semi-structured scheme kept the interviews comparable and yet allowed for improvisation. The interviews were held face-to-face or through Skype-calls. All the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewed.

2.3 Procedure

In the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the study as well as ethical considerations were explained to the interviewees, and they were assured complete anonymity. It was pointed out that the recording would not be listened to by anyone but the researcher, and that it would be deleted after the analysis. The interviews were held between August 2018 and March 2019. Each interview

lasted approximately 1-1,5 hours. Interviews with the Finnish interviewees were held in Finnish, and the other subjects were interviewed in English. Those interviews, that were made face-to-face, were conducted in cafeterias, or in the interviewee's home or office. In order to analyze the interviews, the main themes were identified, and the responses were summarized.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012), as well as the general data protection regulation of the European Union (European Commission, 2016).

2.5 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions.

- (a) What are the reasons why sexual violence is so prevalent in South Sudan?
- (b) What kind of services are available for the survivors of sexual violence, and what kind of consequences do the perpetrators face in South Sudan?
- (c) Is the sexual violence used as a strategy in South Sudan, and if so, what are the factors that make it possible?
- (c) What are the ways to strengthen accountability in South Sudan?
- (d) What kind of approaches are seen effective in ending conflict-related sexual violence, as well as bringing peace to South Sudan?

3. Results

3.1 Life in South Sudan – An Overview of the Interviewees' Experiences

Results in this section are based mainly on the interview question about how the interviewees would describe their experience while in South Sudan. Despite the differences in interviewees' work and biographical factors, their views about the country as a whole were relatively similar. Issues, such as corruption, violence, multi-level conflict, lack of food and clean water, and illiteracy were mentioned regularly. Many described life in South Sudan as unstable, where situations and commands can change so rapidly, that trusting anyone or anything is difficult. Some made it sound even surrealistic in their descriptions: *"I call the country Absurdland"* (Person B) and *"because there is no structure or a clear system, everything is possible in that level that I wouldn't be that surprised if UFOs landed in South Sudan"* (Person J).

Interviewees had worked with different jobs on different levels in South Sudan, yet everyone highlighted how complex and multidimensional the conflict is. *"There are so many levels in this conflict and all those levels are somewhat connected to each other"* (Person J). *"There is a conflict on a global level, on a national level, and then on a tribal level"* (Person I). This was discussed more specifically later in the interview when focus is on the possible resolutions to the conflict.

Working among these issues made the life and work in South Sudan challenging, depressing, and at times, tough for all. Some felt frustration during the stay in South Sudan yet for different reasons, such as for weak order and infrastructure in the country, lack of political will of the leaders, and sometimes because of the country itself. In addition, frustration was felt because of the ineffective operations and because of the inadequate work by the UN.

Several interviewees described their experience as an inspiring, effective chance for self-growth, self-development, and soul-searching, not only at a personal level but also at the professional level. A few pointed out the huge difference in mentality of people and in the structures of the society and governance in South Sudan if compared to the Western world. Many highlighted how important it is to understand and remember that when creating new projects or when finding new solutions to the conflict: *"The same things that work in Europe do not necessarily work in South Sudan"* (Person E).

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, many interviewees wanted to remind about all the positive things in South Sudan as well. There are a lot of people who are not associated with using violence and who want to work for a peaceful future, also at the higher level: *"Those who have very good education and a lot of capacity in many senses, and also good will and meaning to do*

something” (Person H). Furthermore, the women of South Sudan received strong admiration from the interviewees for the ways they survive throughout the days despite the tremendous challenges they face daily: *“I really admire these women, they are so strong-headed”* (Person G).

3.2 Sexual Violence in South Sudan

“It was more like that everyone knew that it was happening and that it was present, but people did not talk openly about it. For women, who were most of the victims, it was a difficult topic to talk about, and for men, who were most of the perpetrators, it was a difficult thing to admit. So yes, the topic stayed in silence when speaking. But the consequences of the violence were very present and obvious to see in both individuals’ lives and in the communities. People were very traumatized and fearful, and the topic kind of pushed itself through to everyday life, and everyone knows at least someone who has been a victim if they themselves have not been. Women live in fear and anxiety wondering when it [sexual violence] will happen to me or to my family. In that way sexual violence is present all the time” (Person D).

3.2.1 Culture of Silence

The interview question was about whether sexual violence is openly talked about in South Sudan or whether it is still a taboo. All the interviewees agreed to say that sexual violence is not generally talked among locals. The biggest reason for not speaking about the topic or experiences is the predominant feeling of shame and stigma among the survivors, and the blame for the events usually burdens the victims instead of the perpetrators. *“People are scared to talk about it. It may lead to bad consequences”* (Person A). A girl, who is raped, is considered as ruined and it will be difficult for her to get married. If a girl’s father hears about these incidents, this daughter will be kicked out of the house because she has no more worth for the family. A woman, who is raped, can be rejected by her husband and sometimes even ostracized by the whole community. For these reasons, people rather stay silent about the incidents because *“sharing those secrets to too many people can be dangerous for women”* (Person G). As a worker, this needed to be taken seriously and sensitively when approaching the survivors of sexual violence. *“For women to be able to talk about their experiences, you need to have a tremendous trust, and you can have that trust only through locals as they won’t talk about any real issues to you unless there is a trust”* (Person I). The whole work among the sexual violence is extremely sensitive, and that work needs to be first approved by the local leaders before anything is started. *“These projects need to be very transparent, because if you do it secretly it can put the workers even in a life-threatening position”* (Person J).

However, one interviewee pointed out that the taboo has started slowly to break down as people made easy references to the issue even though they necessarily did not talk about their personal experiences. *“The awareness about sexual violence has also increased throughout the years and people have started to recognize how prevalent it has been, which in somewhat has also broken the silence”* (Person H).

Furthermore, sexual violence as a topic was able to be discussed with the higher-level officials or with work colleagues. *“But even when we talk about it, we do not go that deeply into it because the sexual violence is so brutal here”* (Person F). Another interviewee pointed out that the context can be discussed, but not as part of the everyday discussion: *“I would underline that in political discussions the sexual violence is not mentioned, unless the discussion is exactly about the sexual violence”* (Person H). Moreover, the discussions on a higher level are necessarily not attached to the practice at the field level. *“The dilemma is how do you move those fine and high-level discussions into a community dynamic”* (Person J).

3.2.2 Prevalence, Place and Types of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is daily present in South Sudan, yet no one knows the exact statistics for how many victims there are and how prevalent it actually is. All the interviewees agreed to say that sexual violence is common and happens daily in South Sudan. *“The amount of violence is just so tremendous, and it cannot be belittled”* (Person J). Person G assumed that there is probably one woman raped every day, yet the individual cases do not appear in news such as greater gang rapes sometimes do. United Nations and local police are trying to collect data about the sexual violence, yet *“they don’t have the correct data, because people don’t trust on police there”* (Person C). Not all cases are reported.

Several interviewees described the use of sexual violence so prevalent that it is considered normal in South Sudanese culture. Some were hesitant calling the behavior normal for the locals yet agreed to say it happened a lot. Some types of violence are seen as more normal in South Sudanese culture since locals do not understand the concept of consent. *“When we started talking about marital rapes, people didn’t even know it happens, they had just thought that it is normal in marriage”* (Person I). Sexual violence that was clearly seen as a weapon of war was more violent and brutal, and not seen as normal aspect of the local culture.

When asked about the type of sexual violence, the answers covered basically everything and especially rape in all possible forms. *“Everything from sexual harassment to very severe, violent brutal gang rapes”* (Person H). Other specific types of sexual violence mentioned were marital

rape, child brides, sexual threatening, harassment and touching, sex slavery, sexual mutilations, forcing one to sexually violate a kin in front of other family members, cutting pregnant women's bellies open to kill the fetus... *"You can imagine the most horrible stories and those are true"* (Person J). In some cases, women are killed after being raped. Sexual violence is used mostly against women and girls, but there are also cases against men and boys.

Sexual violence happens mostly when women go fetch the firewood and water, or at one's home. Places where - mostly women - go to get firewood, are places that military targets. *"They ambush them, they rape them and some of them are killed"* (Person A). These kinds of events have a high prevalence, yet those experiences are kept hidden due to shame and fear women face. *"Women went to collect wood, and disappeared for half of the day, and when they returned, they explained: 'nothing happened, they wanted us just to cook and do their laundry so that's why it took so long' yet you knew what had really happened"* (Person B).

Interviewer asked both Person A and B an additional question why those wood and water collecting trips are not protected. Person A explained that often women's brothers come to escort those women on the trips yet sometimes the enemy kills the brothers, and then take women as their house women and/or rape and/or kill them. Person B answered that some trips are protected, yet those trips are daily trips, and there are not enough resources to have protection for every trip. There have also been some cases where women have falsely claimed that they have been raped while collecting wood, so that they could get more carbon to their camps instead of the need to look for the firewood. *"I don't know how much this actually happens, but sometimes it happens. And it doesn't proof wrong the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of women who have been raped while collecting wood"* (Person B).

When asked whether the sexual violence happens more in public or private settings, the answers varied from sexual violence being prevalent in both public and private places to sexual violence being mostly private issue that happened inside homes. The armed groups go from house to house during the night asking for money, and when there is no money, they rape the women and kill the men. *"Many of the military officers have not been paid for their salaries, they need food, or money for food, so they go from house to house to ask money, and if there is no money, they rape and kill. It is a way of using your power"* (Person F). Rapes that have happened in private places such as homes, but have had many witnesses around the event, can be also seen as public rape. *"It often is public in that sense, that they force husband and children to watch when the woman is being raped, and after that they kill the husband, or put the whole village into a fire when all the women have been raped there first"* (Person J). Children are often those who are witnessing these terrible events,

and as an aftermath they end up in the streets or in the orphanages. Children having seen brutal behavior has long-time effects. They start to think of it as normal behavior. *“Even some small boys have been penetrating other children there. That is learned or seen behavior, not something that a child would make up”* (Person E).

Sometimes raping women in front of others is done as a warning to others; *“to make other women from the opposite tribe afraid”* (Person G). This happens especially when there is an invasion going on in the village (Person E). Raping someone publicly can also be used as a punishment. *“One part of the conflict is that they want the villager to pay a protection fee for the soldier to protect her, which is all bullshit because it is just a way to make money for the soldiers. Because if they refuse to pay, the soldiers could rape all women in the village and ‘teach them a lesson,’ punish them”* (Person G).

Yet there were some interviewees who were hesitant to say that raping would have happened publicly. *“I have never heard about public rapes at marketplace or such. I’ve heard about gang rapes, when soldiers have taken women in their cars or barracks and then raped them, but on the areas where I was, I never heard about public rapes”* (Person I). Another interviewee had never witnessed events in public places but had heard and read about them in the news. *“Some of the operations were quite public in the sense that they got a lot of public attention, so I could not say that all the cases would have necessarily been kept hidden”* (Person H). Third interviewee stated that most of the sexual violence in South Sudan happens in private settings but is not because the perpetrator would be someone close to you but because the soldiers come to you. *“But also, sexual violence is very common in South Sudan even if you look outside the conflict, is it more like a cultural thing that women are expected to deliver or have sex whenever the man feels like it, so that is also part of the picture”* (Person G).

Some interviewees brought it up that the public rapes are more clearly used as a weapon of war compared to private rapes. Other than that, the question about the location of sexually violent events was not seen as important. *“I do not really think it matters to them [locals] whether the violence happens in private or public settings”* (Person E). *“All in all, sexual violence happens inside the tribe communities, inside the bamboo houses where other won’t necessarily hear about it, but then there are also rapes that gets lot of attention and that has been committed more publicly. The violence there is just so diverse, and it all turns into a common, mutual plan and works systematically”* (Person J).

3.2.3 Survivors and Perpetrators

When asked about who the survivors of the sexual violence are in the conflict of South Sudan, every interviewee pointed out that girls and women are the majority of the survivors yet sexual violence can be also targeted towards boys and men. The strength of these women got a lot of respect and recognition.

“I have met survivors, and I need to say they are extremely strong women. Because you know, if there was a rape case in Europe, there would be all kinds of crisis teams around, but in South Sudan there is nothing. So these women are very strong to be able to move on in life. Lot of the women don’t blame the perpetrators because they know that those men were under command. And many of the women get children as a consequence of the rape, and they keep their children, and they don’t treat them worse than other children that they have. Even though they easily could, because every time they look at those children, the mothers remember what happened. So yeah, I really admire these women, they are so strong-headed and actually able to move on. But that being said, I also met women who are struggling to move on, because it’s very traumatizing, especially when there’s many kinds of violence involved. So you have a whole range of experiences within this country” (Person G).

Depending on the work position of the interviewee, some had worked directly with the survivors and discussed with them about their experiences. Some had worked with the survivors assumedly but not necessarily among the issue of sexual violence. *“If the statistics say that 75% of the women in South Sudan have experienced sexual violence, you automatically talk with the survivors, but we didn’t talk about it [sexual violence] that much. About sexual harassment we discussed more, and yes, it is one type of sexual violence, so that came into discussion more often as it happens so much in politics” (Person H).*

When asked whether some women are targeted more than others, it was difficult to get clear answers as there seem to be no group that was safe from the sexual violence in South Sudan. As the sexual violence is genuinely tribal based, the women who are targeted are usually from the other tribes than the perpetrators. However, it is important to remember that sexual violence happens inside women’s own tribes as well. *“The Dinkas are the majority here so then they are targeted more so if you think about it from a mathematical point of view, it is a little tricky to answer. But there are violations to all sides of the conflict and the targets go together with the direction of the conflict” (Person G).* Some interviewees reminded that as it is difficult to get concrete data about the amounts of sexual violence cases, talking about the survivors’ demographic features is often a speculation. *“But of course, there are certain groups that are more vulnerable than others, and I*

assume that women in the rural areas of the country and the internally displaced people are probably those. But what comes to ethnicity, I can't really say" (Person H).

The answers regarding the groups that commit sexual violence were similar to answers about the survivors, violence occurs mostly tribal based but also inside the families. However, men in uniforms were clearly highlighted in many answers. *"It might be the men in uniforms, police, military, someone from the rebel group, someone from their own family or from their own village – the variety is very diverse"* (Person C). Also, as there is no proper data either about the perpetrators, it is difficult to say whether some group has committed sexual violence more than others. *"What I have heard and read, the governmental forces have been in charge of some of the biggest cases especially when it comes to the violence against the civilians, and the sexual violence was part of that"* (Person H). Many interviewees made sure in their answers that all parties of the conflict have been guilty. *"It's really all parties to the conflict, I wouldn't say that any part is worse than others. But of course, the government side is larger so you would find more cases from SPLA because they have more people but if you look at the proportions, I do not think they are worse than others"* (Person G).

Several interviewees made also clear that wearing a uniform in South Sudan does not necessarily tell anything about the party that person is representing. *"Everyone there is wearing a uniform, not only those who belong to the government's military group. Some of the men use their old military uniform from the time they were in power, and some men use those uniforms that they have stolen from the men they have killed in the battles"* (Person I). Thus, uniform is not a qualification in South Sudan. *"Everyone seems to belong to some 'security group' and have some title according to that"* (Person F).

Men, who used sexual violence, were from every age groups. *"It was the young men who said the perpetrators were the older men, and the older men said those were the young men"* (Person I). Even very young boys are using sexual violence as a learned behavior from their parents or from the surrounding environment. *"When 13-year-old boy starts raping his 4-year-old sister, it is a clear consequence from that the whole family lives in a one room or in a one tent, everything happens there while children are seeing and hearing"* (Person C). *"Even some small boys have been penetrating other children there. One time one boy had put a stick to a little girl's vagina thinking it was a normal thing to do"* (Person E). Young boys are also easier to recruit to join battles, and some youths have created their own groups that are actively raping women. *"Imagine being a 15-year-old, uneducated boy with a uniform and AK-47 – what would you do in a society where human life has no worth?"* (Person F).

As with survivors, many interviewees expressed that they have not directly worked with the perpetrators among the sexual violence issues yet assumed that they have worked together with people who have conducted sexual violence. *“I’m sure I met many of those, some of them maybe used sexual violence now or then they had used it during the first civil war”* (Person H). Some interviewees mentioned that to admit using sexual violence is a huge taboo in South Sudan. Furthermore, the understanding of what counts as sexual violence was problematic due to the cultural norms. *“I talked with men about the intimate partner rape and marital rape, and the whole concept of consent was totally unfamiliar for them”* (Person I). Many men think it is their right to rape a woman they have a relationship with. *“The arguments for using sexual violence come from the ingrained attitudes for the women’s low role in the society”* (Person C). Girls are often seen in families as market goods because they can be sold, and as the husband has bought his wife, he has the feeling that he owns her. According to the cultural norms in South Sudan, women are not supposed to show if they want sex, they have to look like they do not want sex at all. *“I said to the men that they must know their wives and I would assume that they know when their wife is really saying ‘no’ and when it is the cultural ‘no’”* (Person I).

What comes to sexual violence in battles, the feelings and attitudes among the perpetrators towards the victims were somewhat different. *“I can’t speak for all the perpetrators but the ones that I talked with, regretted what they did and they feel bad about it, but they were also under command when they did it”* (Person G). For the same reason not all women blame their perpetrators as they understood those men had no chance to refuse. However, regret may be seen differently when it is mixed with bitterness and when the actions have been conducted as a revenge to an opposing tribe or group. *“When you have a civil war going on like it is in South Sudan where the government is part of it, it is really tearing down trust in societies and it is kind of reinforcing all the differences and it is also building up all these thoughts that you have about the other part”* (Person G). Thus, the regret may be more on a general level and not so much on an interpersonal level. *“What I have understood from many discussions is that many soldiers think that the other tribe deserved what they did to them”* (Person G).

3.2.3.1 Services for Survivors

Interviewees were asked about what kind of services there are in South Sudan for the survivors of sexual violence. Services were divided into physical health services, psychological services, and judicial services. The humanitarian services were also mentioned as part of the help system, but those services were not linked specifically into sexual violence.

There are physical health services around the big cities and mostly in the area of the capital city Juba. There are barely any public health services organized by the state. Different non-governmental organizations (NGO) and United Nations' (UN) organizations are mainly those who offer the help for locals, and *"then there are some private health services but those are used only by the rich ones"* (Person J). All the interviewees were able to recall some kind of help for physical wounds, but few mentioned that there are not enough these services and that there is a huge need for doctors in South Sudan. *"There were some organizations that worked with the medical aid services after the rape, gave pills and such"* (Person I). Some organizations work specifically with the health problems due to gender-based violence (GBV). *"There are services to heal the wounds from sexual violence and even from FGM and usually those wounds heal up, it is the psychological wounds that would require more help"* (Person E).

All interviewees agreed to say that there are not enough services for psychological issues. *"There are so many kinds of traumas and with everyone as the conflict has kept going on for decades. That would require so much resources that usually the help aids think that it is easier to send there just food"* (Person D). Also, some of the services were described as insufficient, difficult to access, or not trustworthy due to the lack of confidentiality. However, some great examples were brought up by the interviewees. *"There is this "One Stop"-center in Juba, where the survivor would get all the help she needs in one place: physical first aid, psycho-social support, and help with judicial procedure and report making"* (Person C). The problem with this center seemed to be that not enough people knew about it, and it was located only in Juba. *"We gave mental first aid and psycho-social support, we tried to activate people in positive ways, and we tried to help when a person was in shock"* (Person I). However, in many cases it was mostly the family members and relatives whose help was accepted by the survivors, and from the international workers they preferred to ask only for some guidance or consultation. Coping mechanisms among the survivors always vary, and one popular way to try to cope with such traumas in South Sudan is staying silent about the events of sexual violence. *"When there are no services, they may get some social support from each other, but mostly they just want to stay quiet and forget what has happened and move on"* (Person G).

Some organizations worked among the police and taught them skills for meeting the survivors of sexual violence respectfully. *"We tried to teach the local police some mental first aid skills, because they have arrested lot of women because they had tried suicide after experiencing violence. Police had tied them up so that these women could not harm themselves. We tried to offer advice to the police and tell them that there are alternatives for handling the situations"* (Person I). This

example was still an exception for the services in the way that it is also preventive work as most of the services seemed to be for survivors after sexual violence had occurred. *“One organization focused only on the after-work, case management with psycho-social support that tried to prevent the stigmatization, because the news traveled so fast in South Sudan. They told other organizations what had happened and where but without names and identities”* (Person I). There were also some organizations that worked specifically with children who had experienced sexual violence.

About the reporting possibilities and judicial services, the challenges were not that much of the selection of these services but instead with the locals' ability for using these services and with the weak functioning of the justice system in South Sudan. *“There are some reporting possibilities, but as the society doesn't work there properly, it doesn't lead to anything, sometimes it may just make the case even worse. There are police who have not received their salaries, who do not have any skills for their job, they lack education, they lack understanding”* (Person F). The fear and the shame stop locals to reach for the services and to report. *“Unfortunately, there is a strong culture of gossiping, and the confidentiality does not always work as it should. It is very difficult to stay anonymous there”* (Person C). *“There is also this ‘reporting mechanism’ where the victims can report anonymously, or the organizations can report if they heard about some cases, but it is just still so difficult for people to talk or report about the topic even when the discussions were secured and held anonymous”* (Person D). With this mechanism they are trying to have some sort of data about how much sexual violence happens in South Sudan but since people are afraid to use it, the amounts stay much lower than what the reality is.

According to many interviewees, the trust for the local services under the government is weak and seeking help from those providers after experiencing sexual violence can make the survivor's situation worse instead of better. *“It can be dangerous for women to talk about the events, because if her husband hears that she was raped, he could reject her later on when he finds out. So sharing those secrets to too many people can be dangerous for women”* (Person G). This puts women in a situation, where they need to choose between getting help and being rejected, or not having any help yet staying as a member in the family. *“And here, being rejected is worse than not being able to talk and get services, they have different priorities here and that should be taken in consideration in any work that is done here”* (Person G). However, the international NGOs are seen as more trustworthy because these organizations have very clear principles in their work. *“Through international NGOs the work is done by respecting the victim and taking the victim's life situation into account when offering the services. There is a specific protocol for asking certain questions”* (Person J).

Survivors not reporting about their experiences was not only due to the fear of being seen or for the shame around the issue. People in South Sudan do not trust the justice system, and many interviewees expressed that there is no justice system on the governing level. People are also afraid of the police. *“There are not really any judicial services because there is no independent justice and the justice system in South Sudan doesn’t work. And nobody wants to put their hands on the justice system because it is so biased and works in whatever ways it wants. It doesn’t support women at all, it is a totally unfair mechanism”* (Person J). An interviewee who worked with the local politicians said they tried to bring this issue into discussion and to strengthen the justice system by supporting the NGOs. *“Some international organizations cooperated to offer some judicial services that we tried through our work to support and to get the parliament to support. There were huge gaps in offering the services for survivors. But we tried to promote at least some initiatives and support services”* (Person H).

Some interviewees brought up that one challenge in offering any services was the high illiteracy rate in South Sudan. *“I have to be little critical for some international organizations, because there are lot of banners around South Sudan, that tells where to go or where to call in cases of sexual violence, and those are in English, but the problem is that these people cannot read”* (Person J). In addition, most of the services are offered in English which makes the services quite exclusive leaving a lot of survivors outside the help. *“Language barriers are one reason, there are English speakers in the capital region, but for Arabic speakers and those with their own dialects there are no services”* (Person B). Some solutions were brought up. *“Instead of written text, you should try to use some symbolics, but how do you use symbolics in this context for people who have suffered tremendous violence. Altogether, having the services are just technical arrangements, but getting women to come there is a problem”* (Person J).

“They are really lacking these services, and usually the few services they have are funded by NGOs and UN, and these services are not the most attractive ones to fund for the donors so it is really difficult to get consistent, good services and I would say there is a huge gap in South Sudan” (Person G). Every interviewee emphasized the need for the services and there would also be a huge will to do the work, yet without the funding it is difficult to create any change. *“Organizations are very driven to do this work, but they have small resources”* (Person B).

3.2.4 Sexual Violence as a Strategy of War

The answers considering whether the sexual violence have been used as a strategy of war in South Sudan were similar on the surface but on a deeper level there were some differences in the point of

views. Everyone agreed to say that sexual violence is a weapon of war, yet the word “strategy” caused some dissents in the context. *“What is the difference between a strategy and a tactic? Strategy is made to win a war, and tactic is made to win a battle. They don’t have any strategy in South Sudan, but they use it as a tactic of war. In other words, there is a planned action in a situation that is not planned”* (Person F).

Many interviewees described the South Sudanese way of live or way of governing so mayhem and unorganized, that it was difficult for them to think that the sexual violence would have been used strategically. *“I would be surprised and would doubt to hear if it actually always was strategic because usually the way that these groups functioned was far away from being strategic”* (Person H). *“The cohesion was so weak in these groups that I don’t know if the sexual violence ever has been strategic, I doubt that these groups ever had a strong, mutual, clear vision or strategy in any of their doings. So from that point of view, I would not believe that it has been strategically commanded by some higher level military leaders”* (Person H). However, those, who thought that there was no strategy on using sexual violence on a general level, said there might have been some strategic vision on the lower lever combats. *“Some of the groups there have been like their own kingdoms so there might have been some leaders who have had some strategy in mind or a message that they have wanted to send through this way, but not that cross-cutting when it is about the opposition or the government groups”* (Person H).

Generally, every interviewee was able to share examples of how sexual violence has been used as a strategy or as a weapon. *“What comes to the tribal conflicts, raping the enemy is a pure weapon of war. The systematic gang rape is here a normal thing”* (Person F). Additionally, Person E pointed out how consistent the background factors for sexual violence as a weapon of war and the domestic violence are. *“It was definitely the number one reason for sexual violence. It is a power and control thing, just like in domestic violence as well. And you cannot really understand this sexual violence as a strategy of war without knowing the reasons behind domestic violence. Sometimes sexual violence has nothing to do with the sex, it is more about the power and control”* (Person E).

Sexual violence is an effective weapon of war. *“Even if you do not directly work with the subject, it is clear to see that the sexual violence is used there a lot as a way to gain and show power. It is a way to disgrace someone. It traumatizes the victim for a long time. It does not affect only on the individual, but also on the family and the community”* (Person D). It affiliates all other kinds of battles and tactics. *“Rape is a systematic weapon, and it is a part of the actions invariably. Very often the soldiers are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but that covers everyone who*

works in state's security groups. And they are systematically explained and commanded to rape women and children. It is an unbelievably nonsense way to use violence" (Person J).

It was brought up in the interviews many times how prevalent the sexual violence in South Sudan is. However, it is difficult to say how much sexual violence has been used as a war weapon and how much in other ways, when thinking about the sexual violence altogether. *"There have been events when it has been used as a war weapon and it is linked to that publicity and on the way that it has been discussed in public"* (Person H). Few interviewees stated that the media coverage of the sexual violence as a strategy of war has not been accurate. Furthermore, Person H told that the scientific literature about the conflict has also often expressed that sexual violence is used as a war weapon much less than assumed, and instead it is often more about the inner cohesion between the groups. *"This argument resonates to me in that I know about the conflict of South Sudan and how scattered the groups were and how many different groups were recruited so I could see how that theory could fit in with the South Sudan conflict as well"* (Person H).

3.2.4.1 Explaining the High Prevalence of Sexual Violence in South Sudan

Interviewees were asked their thoughts about why sexual violence has been so prevalent and brutal in the civil war of South Sudan. Several reasons came up. One is the long history with wars and the traumas that have carried along from one generation to another. *"It is because of the people who have been traumatized during the war, and not rehabilitated"* (Person A). Long history of war that has been going on for decades has torn up the trust between people, and there has not been a feeling of togetherness as the state is so fragmented. *"This country has been under the civil war around 30 years, so they do not know about anything else"* (Person F). Person G points out that altogether there have been conflicts going on over 50 years. *"We always talk about the 2013 conflict because that is the last one, but before that was the liberation, 1st Sudanese war, 2nd Sudanese war... There have been only conflicts for such a long time. So I think at some point you, I wouldn't say used to it, but it kind of escalates and you create something that is a new normal, and the violence is measured against the new normal"* (Person G). One interviewee also wondered whether the relationship between South Sudan and Sudan has something to do with the high prevalence of sexual violence. *"Maybe because when South Sudanese were part of Sudan, I wonder if they were so subjugated by Sudan then. I don't know"* (Person B).

Many interviewees pointed out that the high amount of sexual violence could be linked to the fact, that there is so much violence on a general level in South Sudan. *"I think that because the level of violence is so high in South Sudan, and not only the level of violence, it's also the gravity of*

violence” (Person G). Tribal fights, dowries and cattle trading were issues that many assumed to be linked to the sexual violence as well. *“The cattle are the main current issue in South Sudan, and we have cattle owners in pastoralist communities, and they are clashing all the time, and I don’t even know how many people have died in those only during the past few weeks”* (Person G). Person G further points out that in South Sudan there are also youth groups, that are formed based on everyone’s age, such as groups of 13-year-olds, 14-year-olds, 15-year-olds and so on. *“And they clash on a very frequent basis, and it’s not like fist fights, they actually kill each other, and then you have retaliation”* (Person G).

Some interviewees feel a little hesitant when saying that ‘violence is so prevalent in South Sudan that they are used to it or that it is considered as normal’ yet choose those specific phrases to describe how common issue the violence in every day South Sudan is. *“I wouldn’t say that all who do these things are mentally ill because it is so common. It is so common that it is normal. And when other groups of humans have no worth in your mind, what do you think about them then?”* (Person J). The original reasons for the conflict have started slowly to fade away and change into chaotic battles only based on the tribal differences. *“Especially when the violence is very ethnicity-based and not anymore that much about politics. The conflict starts to be so ingrained when everyone sees the others only as enemies. It is a difficult equation”* (Person D).

The meaning of revenge between the tribal conflicts was mentioned a few times as well to be linked to the question. *“Also, people are so used to the circle of revenge, but not only ‘you killed one of us, so I am not going to kill just one but two from you’ – you need to always go a little bit further than the other one”* (Person D). “Going further” refers to using sexual violence in addition to regular violence between the conflicting parties. *“They face violence a lot already in their families and relationships, so when the sexual violence is used as a weapon of war, it does not seem that much different to them. I could describe that as an evil final result of all the bad things that have happened in the country for the past decades”* (Person D).

Another major reason brought up by several interviewees was the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. *“Also, in political conflicts with ethnic dimensions, they always try to find ways for boys to disgrace, humiliate, violate, and torture the other opponent. And I think that because the conflict has gone on for so long already, shooting someone does not have enough effect because everyone does that and have done so for so long. So what could have a bigger impact on the enemy?”* (Person D). Sexual violence as a weapon of war has been noticed to be more effective and powerful than guns. *“You can kind of compare it to shooting someone in the stomach: that person does not die but suffers a lot. In that sense the conflict-related sexual violence is similar: if the*

victim does not die, the consequences will carry a long way. It is just a terrible weapon of war” (Person C). The effects spread on a wide scale. *“Sexual violence as a tactic of war breaks down not only the individual but the whole family, tribe and community for a long time – for so long until that thought could be changed through education”* (Person B). In addition, few interviewees reminded that sexual violence works well as a tool in ethnic cleansing, which has been furthermore one major part of the conflicts in South Sudan. *“Then, the conflict has created some ethnic dimensions that is often linked into sexual violence, where one ethnic group wants to send message through the women to the other groups”* (Person H).

As the sexual violence is mostly targeted towards women, some interviewees explained how women’s low status in South Sudan’s society has furthermore prompted and enabled the wide use of sexual violence. *“In a society, where the structures do not support the citizens enough, and especially not women and children who are suffering most from the violence, they are in such a vulnerable state. That makes them an easy target”* (Person D). Patriarchy and women’s role in society were mentioned a few times. *“The way the power is counted here is about how many wives you have as a man, and if in a battle you get to harm the property of the opposite’s side – the property is the women – it is a heroic action”* (Person F). *“There is some certain system that has helped it, because if another person has no human worth, then it is easy to hurt that person. Because that person is not a person. And then you add there women, who in the patriarchal system are already lower in worth in their own community.”* (Person J). *“When there is a tremendous conflict in a country, in any country, it is very typical that in those times the women’s rights are not any priority, and it sort of gives a good possibility for sexual violence”* (Person D). If there are any negotiations for peace, women are not included in those meetings and women’s rights are not discussed. *“The priorities in the discussions are in resources, oil, government positions, job titles and such, that is what the elite is interested in when being at a negotiating table”* (Person D). It is impossible to change the situation without women’s involvement, and without women who would hold some power in the society. *“Women are just in such a weak state there, they have no possibility to speak out loud and to stand by their own feet, they have no respect in the society”* (Person D).

The impunity and lack of working justice system were seen as allowing factors for sexual violence. *“I’m not any expert on this field, but I guess it is just that, that it has all been possible without any consequences. It easily puts the soldiers and others in that mindset, that it is all okay to do because I don’t need to carry any responsibility for the consequences”* (Person D). *“Also, the lack of control in the groups which has made it possible for everyone to do whatever they want, and*

which has possibly even encouraged people to act in the way that sexual violence is often used” (Person H). Furthermore, the unstructured governance and lack of rules and security have kept up the impunity with any kind of violence. “There is no ‘Rule of Law’ there is no accountability, it is a very fragmented country with many different small groups in many different levels. Lot of things happen because there is no central governing either with the opposition or the government, and instead everything is based on alliances that you do with different groups, and those alliances change all the time” (Person I). The society runs without any kind of supreme leadership and without the trust, respect or understanding of the laws. “It is the incoherence of the groups, and the lack of norms and rules in any way of this conflict, and tactically I don’t think that some of them are even aware of that there were any rules of war existing, which can be explained with the backgrounds of the groups, the illiteracy and such” (Person H). As the situation has been unorganized for decades, the citizens do not necessarily know about any other way to live. “And people live in pockets around the state. To use violence is part of that because there haven’t been any institutions in those areas to show how the society is supposed to work” (Person J). The total lack of rules has created a base for the security to start breaking down. “And all this together is possible because of the structure of the state and the lack of rules, the starting points are weak and they have gotten even weaker during the conflict so that there is no sense of basic security and there is no one who would maintain the basic security up there” (Person H).

Several interviewees linked the other reasons to people being uneducated, to the high rate of illiteracy, and to the country being counted as undeveloped. *“And of course, we have a very low education system here, it is only one third of the country that can actually read and write” (Person G). However, no one mentioned these reasons alone but always as part of the combination of other factors. The lack of education was seen also as an influencer on the society for missing the feeling of being one state or being together, which furthermore was seen as a reason for the sexual violence happening so frequently. “There has been no system by the central governing that through education would have brought a sense of community and togetherness between the people in the state” (Person J). This feeling is important during and after the conflicts and makes recovery and re-building the society possible. “They are missing the confluence that I see other countries have, even as a weak” (Person J).*

There was also wondering, whether there has been as much sexual violence in South Sudan as the media has suggested. *“One thing that is not really popular is that both media and organizations are taking advantage of the subject. I wouldn’t say that things had been embellished, but often a lot of things are said to happen without anyone checking if it was true – that is business. South Sudan*

is business. There are hundreds of organizations, and it sells. It unfortunately sells” (Person I). Person I had interviewed a lot of people in South Sudan and heard awful stories yet felt that the media gave out much more than those stories than what had happened. However, Person I wanted to remind that when the issue is sexual violence or sexual exploitation, it is something that needs to be taken seriously instead of downplaying it. *“I’m just wondering if all the news has been fully checked, I don’t know”* (Person I). Furthermore, Person I pointed out some events where the media coverage had been the opposite, and the stories had been covered up in the name of peace. Few other interviewees agreed to say, that there has been more reporting about sexual violence in South Sudan compared to other countries and conflicts, even though there would have been similar cases. *“But I think it is maybe more reported of South Sudan because the same thing is happening also in many other countries like Congo or Nigeria or Mali, but you do not hear so much about that. In South Sudan there is quite a large UN coverage, so it is probably more reported”* (Person E).

Everyone agreed to say that there are many reasons for the high prevalence of sexual violence in South Sudan, and that many of those reasons are either directly or indirectly linked to each other. For that reason, decreasing or eliminating sexual violence in South Sudan during the conflict will be a difficult equation. *“Everyone here knows conflict, everyone here knows violence, but very few here know what is peace”* (Person G).

3.3 Accountability

Interviewees were asked about the accountability in South Sudan and what are their thoughts regarding the justice system. *“Forget about the accountability, there is none. You can see the law is not above the tribes. The tribes do not punish their own members”* (Person A). Many pointed out that the tribes have their justice systems and similarly to the system that state has, it does not work properly. *“The criminal justice system in South Sudan is totally zero, it is just a joke. If you have money, you can succeed in court. It has nothing to do with being guilty or non-guilty. All about power”* (Person B). None of the interviewees showed any trust for the justice system and everyone had critical points to make about accountability. *“Like in many countries, in South Sudan it always falls for the victim to prove what has happened and to do all the work to get the perpetrator punished. The society does not support the victim but rather makes it possible for the perpetrator to get out of the situation. It is very difficult to trust the justice system there”* (Person D).

There were few or even no cases of the judicial consequences that interviewees had heard or witnessed to happen for the perpetrators of sexual violence. *“There were few cases where the perpetrators were held accountable and got media coverage, but this was more just to kinda “show*

off” others” (Person B). There is the police and there are prisons in South Sudan, yet those do not work correctly. *“There was one case, where the police actually went after one perpetrator and put him in the jail where he received some psychological help. But soon after he was sentenced there, his family came to the police and demanded that this man get free and come home to take care of his family”* (Person D). Only people with power benefit from the current justice system. Power can come from money or through relationships. *“Sometimes you see events, when someone – especially someone who was government’s soldier or supporter – who had done something criminal, was caught by the police in very impressive and public ways and taken into the jail. But soon after that, they were released in silence because someone had bribed the jail officers”* (Person D). Corruption is not the only problem with the police, but also the ingrained attitudes. *“I’m not sure I have heard anything, but the court system is very poorly developed here. And the police are not really in a position to investigate properly”* (Person G).

Instead of using the national court system, locals had their own ways to solve crimes. *“These kinds of cases are usually solved between different families or different clans, and they negotiate how many cows we need to pay about this incident as a compensation”* (Person I). Some of the cases are discussed only between the clashing families, yet sometimes they use so-called tribal courts. *“The court systems do not really work here but I suspect that in the villages they have more like a local court system where the elders of the village take the role of a judge”* (Person G). Sexual violence is rarely or never handled in the local courts either. *“There is some sort of unofficial court system under the tribes, but I assume they handle there other crimes than sexual. Of course, if someone has raped a woman from their own tribe it may happen, but if it has been part of the war tactic, then there would be no consequences. Raping other tribes’ women is an honorable action in war. These men are seen as heroes in their own tribe”* (Person F). In addition, some cases are solved without the courts or outsiders. *“The rape cases may be solved between the perpetrator’s and survivor’s families: there might be some paid compensation”* (Person C).

Some interviewees mentioned the “Terrain Hotel case” that got a lot of publicity in the media. *“There were very few court cases, especially this Terrain Hotel case in 2016 which even led to some punishments. But it was more like a “show off” for the public as ‘yes, we do take care of these kinds of crimes’ which was not the truth”* (Person C). Furthermore, other countries got involved with the case and it could have not been dismissed without consequences. *“This case at the Terrain Hotel was probably the only one that actually led to real court and punishments, because the international pressure was so strong for that. But the ordinary citizens usually are left without this kind of justice when something happens”* (Person D). Individual cases stay outside the court system

as there are no resources for investigating those crimes, and no justice system that would sentence the perpetrators. *“Well, you must have heard about the hotel case in 2016, where there were sentences. Generally, it needs to be an exceptionally huge or exceptionally brutal case so that it would be even covered in news. But if it’s a ‘normal’ case where someone is just raped in their house, nothing is going to happen”* (Person F). However, some huge cases are also tried to be hidden. *“Not long time ago here was a massive gang rape, where 150 women were raped. Doctors Without Borders reported about it, but the South Sudan government declined the whole thing and said that there is no evidence of that event, and it has not happened. That was it”* (Person F).

Many brought up that women are not treated equally in both national and tribal courts. *“They have these local courts but none of them are benefitting women. So they don’t go through sexual violence cases in those courts”* (Person J). The sentences are usually possible to cover through compensations, such as cows. *“In these kinds of courts men get justice, but women don’t. Women don’t get these cows, the tribal chief gets a part of it and the rest goes to the family, which is led by a man”* (Person I). In South Sudanese culture women are not supposed to talk aloud if there is a man with a high authority in the same room. *“So if the report happens to get into the court, there is always a man judge and usually the plaintiff is a woman – the women don’t speak because they feel like they have no right to speak in that kind of situation. The case does not even get into the hearings of the witnesses, because the women don’t speak. Then the case is disclosed with no consequences to anyone”* (Person C).

Women’s worth is measured differently than of men’s:

“Something that I really want to bring up regarding the sexual violence in South Sudan is the culture of agreements. For example, if there is a girl that has sex with a boy, and even if it happens from free will and in pure consensus, there is an automatic thought that the boy has raped the girl and there is need for paying the compensation. The girl is always seen so strongly as a way to make money. When a girl is born in the family, that means automatically that when the girl is older, the family can sell her to some rich man and get cattle, goats, money and other goods. So when it happens that the girl has had sex before the marriage, she is seen as a ruined merchandise and there is a need for compensation for that. And in some cases, if the girl was really raped and the perpetrator is known, the family went to talk to the perpetrator’s family and pressured that this perpetrator, boy needs to take the girl as his wife because it was his fault that she is ruined now. And in worst case, this raped girl ends up living with this perpetrator, possibly with bunch of other wives, without any worth in that family. And there are tremendous amounts of these kinds of events. The sufferings of the victims just keep going and going” (Person C).

Survivor of sexual violence are not believed or supported. Perpetrators are not being punished. *“Very rarely the system works that way that the victim would get enough support and could start the survival, and that the perpetrator would be held accountable – it just does not work well in that kind of nation”* (Person D). Sometimes the result of the courts can be totally opposite for what is considered as right. *“What I’ve heard is that most of these cases end up that way, that the woman is judged from the rape with adultery”* (Person I).

3.3.1 Challenges with Reporting

Women do not report about the sexual violence they have experienced, as they do not feel like it would benefit them in any way. One reason is, that they fear that they would not be believed if the report leads into a court case. *“Already before the conflict, the possibilities to bring cases concerning violence against women to court were very minimal. Often those cases end that way that the woman who is accusing, gets accused about something herself, leading women not to report at all, which is a huge problem as well”* (Person H). The survivors are taught to feel ashamed of themselves if they have been raped. The survivor is considered as the guilty one of the event. *“Shame stops women from reporting. They don’t want to give explanations where they have been, so they prefer to lie”* (Person B). If the survivor’s family or husband hears about the rape, she would be considered as a shameful woman who has ruined the reputation of the family. Therefore, she might be excluded totally from any social interactions and may end up sleeping on the street.

Another reason is the fear towards the police. *“I think it is very under-reported because the police would not take it seriously because they think it is an ok thing to do. And of course, they would not report to their own families, because of the fear of exclusion”* (Person E). Police forces are also highly corrupted as they have not received their salaries, and therefore are using their work status and power in the wrong way. *“There used to be this ‘form 8,’ like after every rape you needed to fill up that form 8 to the police. It wasn’t working because the police used it as a way to get money”* (Person I). Furthermore, people who live outside the cities are far away from the police, and when they get raped, they do not have the possibility to report right away. *“Then they might have some other reason to come to the city after three months, which is when they file the report but after that long time it is nearly impossible to investigate the event, especially when often the perpetrator is unknown”* (Person C).

3.3.2 Seeking for Justice

“Well, everything is possible. Signs for the future don’t seem that good. There is a peace agreement that exists in some way and that has some relevance and there are clear steps for it so all the elements are basically already there, so according to that and if we only look at the written text, I would of course say yes, it is possible. And we can’t deny that few have been sentenced already and it would be interesting to check whether they are still in the prison. But we can’t be naïve, South Sudan is not a country with a long history with the rule of law, human rights or with promoting accountability. And if we think about the time frame when it is going to happen, I wouldn’t say that anywhere in the near future but also there is no point for losing hope and giving up, they still have the possibility for peace. There is no immunity in the peace agreement, the basis is already there but it requires remarkable efforts from everyone in order to achieve it” (Person H).

Interviewees were asked about their thoughts whether on someday the perpetrators would be held accountable in South Sudan. Some interviewees remained hopeful, yet many saw the equations too complicated and did not believe, that there would be justice in any near future. In addition, interviewees shared their ideas for the possible solutions to increase the accountability and to end the impunity in South Sudan.

“This accountability is such a ‘hot potato’ in peace work, and especially in South Sudan because if you think about what happened in 2016, what happened in 2013, and then all those decades before that. So, if there comes peace and after that all the crimes should be handled with accountability, we would all be in jail” (Person D). The conflicts have been part of South Sudan’s history for a long time already, thus investigating all the crimes would be an impossible task. *“Identifying the suspected persons is extremely difficult. Police have no mandate, peacekeepers neither have the possibility to investigate or track the perpetrators” (Person B).* In addition, many of the crimes have been conducted as a revenge for another crime and solving the origin of the smaller conflicts on a tribal level might be as well impossible. *“So in a way, where should we draw the line? How old crimes should we talk about? And in many cases the crimes are part of the circle of revenge, and many of the crimes are linked together in a way that “if that has not happened, then this one also has not happened” so where would you draw the line?” (Person D).*

Holding anyone accountable seems difficult now when there is no working justice system, or any institution that could look at the issue neutrally. *“Justice can be distributed in South Sudan, but it would be done unfairly with other interests in mind” (Person J).* Furthermore, if someone was held accountable right now, it might have been done as propaganda or as a ‘show off.’ *“In media they can write that ‘these specific people’ will be held accountable, but probably it would end up that way, that those soldiers who are held accountable, will die in battles before they are being caught*

or they run away and join to other groups because fighting is the only thing they can do, or they get out of the country in some way” (Person J). The situation for the leaders and chiefs might not be any different. “And there are those high-level leaders that will be killed for political reasons. In case they will ever get sentenced in some court that will probably be unfair” (Person J).

Several interviewees brought up the possibility of having some sort of criminal tribunal or truth commission in South Sudan, as a solution for enhancing the accountability. *“The information that we collected, the operation Rule of Law, and their own actions are all supporting that it would be possible to create some kind of tribunal there. But they need to make the decision whether they want to create that” (Person C). By decision-making, Person C refers to some African countries where they have decided not to have a tribunal, and instead have forgiven everyone and decided to continue life from an empty table. “But I would really like to believe that there will be some kind of tribunal. For the sake of the survival of the citizens it needs to happen. Rwanda is a good example in this, despite all the horrific things that happened there. If there is a will, everything is possible” (Person C). Yet again, the issue about the investigation was mentioned. “I heard that there have been some plans to get some sort of court here to judge these crimes, but I think it is still just a plan. And also, if someone was raped, let’s say two years ago, it is almost impossible to start investigating it now” (Person F). In addition, South Sudanese may have dissenting opinions about having a tribunal. “Locals do not want a court system here, if something is done to their own tribe members, they go and revenge that to the other tribe. They have taken the justice in their own hands” (Person F).*

What kind of tribunal or court system it should be in South Sudan, that is what many interviewees were still unsure about. Different ideas were discussed and reflected. *“I think as far as the peace process, there will be some sort of appetite in the general public to hold people accountable for their actions, in order to move forward. What kind of form will it take, I’m not sure to be honest” (Person G). Reconciliation processes from Rwanda and South Africa were mentioned as examples for the alternative ways to bring justice. Person G brings up that necessarily having a similar court system in South Sudan than what is considered as a proper process in Europe, would not work in South Sudan. Considering the capacity that South Sudan currently has would make it unrealistic to expect having a European style, fair trial where the reconciliation process was done through punishing. “What they did for example in Rwanda after genocide, people admit what they did and even said I’m sorry for the affected families and I think that is a more realistic path in South Sudan. So I think there will be some alternative ways. But will all of them be punished, the*

answer is no. Will some of them get punished, maybe. Would it be important for the reconciliation, yes I think so” (Person G).

Creating a tribunal according to South Sudanese ways should be remembered. Person D suggested creating a justice system that would be based on the idea of what the Western world has about accountability, but with some traditional, South Sudanese elements on it. *“So that we could reconcile things in a way that fits best in South Sudan’s culture. Such as these hybrid models that have been discussed lately” (Person D).* However, another interviewee doubts whether the hybrid models were the right solution in South Sudan. *“It is not all that simple that all South Sudanese would be willing to have the Western style of legal system. Many of them have this thought that they do not want to start going through the accusation and sentencing, or if that needs to be done, they would like to do it according to their own reconciliation ways” (Person H).* The alternatives need to be thought and planned carefully, and together with the locals by paying attention on what it is that they would prefer. *“It is important to remember that the best way to enhance accountability is not necessarily some hybrid legal system that is forced from outside but instead something else. Sometimes I wonder if it was better to enforce some legal system from outside that is implemented poorly or not at all or use other ways of reconciliation that would be more helpful for the survivors. Sometimes we get stuck in something between the reconciliation and accountability, that often ends up being the worst possibility” (Person H).*

The question is whether the form of the justice system should be based on retribution, where you use the courts and punishments, or on restoration, where you use forgiveness and mediation. *“When you think about which one is better for the country, you need to think about the long-term consequences and what would make it possible for people to live together and to rebuild the nation together if peace comes to South Sudan. So if people are put into prisons, will it prevent or benefit the development? This is such a big question without one simple answer” (Person D).* Several interviewees brought up similar thoughts, most of them seemed to lean more on the retributive justice system. *“I feel that more and more women were talking about transitional justice and clearly wanted someone to pay something for all this. And especially after independence, the culture of impunity has been very present and, in that way, has made many of the atrocities possible later on. So something really needs to change. If you just think that ‘let’s forget all this and move on,’ I don’t really think that it would help anything in the situation. That hasn’t helped in the past” (Person H).* Person J agrees that forgiving everyone does not solve the problems on a local level if the state institutions do not work properly. *“This would just mean that perpetrators would get off scot-free” (Person J).* Furthermore, Person J discussed the dilemma of sentencing or forgiving the

high generals and other leaders. *“Those, who keep up the war, are not going to end it unless they get full immunity for it. Because those who kind of silently accept the use of sexual violence, they are those who know that if they don’t continue the war, they will get themselves in trouble. So they are in that sense fighting for their own life in that chain of command”* (Person J). In addition, Person J is concerned that if these leaders were sentenced only to make them an example, it might be too extreme kind of approach and therefore go wrong. *“But instead, they should get a certain sentence for their actions because they have accepted the use of sexual violence. Because if they get off scot-free, then the citizens of South Sudan, whom this whole issue is about, get the feeling that this institution doesn’t work, and it is unfair. Because everyone should understand the concept of what is wrong and what is right, which in South Sudan is now quite doubtful”* (Person J). Holding people accountable through some solid system would be the proper way, not forgiving everyone without any consequences. *“Otherwise, we kind of silently accept everything, and it would make it possible for other future conflicts to take advantage of doing the same way and no one would be held accountable but given amnesty instead”* (Person J).

Giving amnesty for everyone would not have the same impact on everyone. People on the deep field level do not have internet or newspaper, and they do not care about the political speeches coming from the higher level. Thus, they would not follow the agenda. *“For that, they need to get the traditional tribal chiefs to come together for that work. Otherwise, it has no meaning on field level. It needs to be done holistically”* (Person I). In a countryside, some of the tribes hold so strong, traditional ‘bench code’ that it will not change quickly. One way to start the change is to involve these tribal chiefs in the political discussions with others. In addition, women’s involvement in the discussions is needed crucially as well. *“If the woman is educated, and belongs to a leading tribe, she has some possibilities”* (Person I).

Holding perpetrators accountable when there is currently no working justice system, makes the scenario difficult to believe in for some interviewees. *“They are not going to get it happen that the justice system works in the way that perpetrators would get punished and such, because it is about a political will. And when there is no political will, there will be no justice. The Highest Court has no power. Why would they want to give the power to those who would use it inappropriately?”* (Person I). First, there needs to be political will and second, the political system needs to work before building the justice system can begin. In addition, Person I reminds that the political will is also linked to the economy. *“They will find political will after all these discussions and pressure, but that is not sustainable, because they are going to do it then only because they have to do it*

because there's no more money. No system can be based on that. But it can be a start for something" (Person I).

The religious leaders often prefer to use more restoration than retribution. *"The religious leaders are quite strongly thinking that forgiveness and reconciliation are the key factors in strengthening the relationships in the community, and that those are creating a strong base for the future and also for possible further conflicts and ways to get over them"* (Person D). The restoration model focuses more on the future of South Sudan than on the past and is in many ways inevitable for making the peace sustainable. *"It would help people to go to school together, work together, marry each other... People cannot go forward in their lives with all those traumas if there is no some sort of reconciliation process that the nation would go through"* (Person D).

Despite the method that is used to increase accountability, there is a crucial need for hope and for seeing some progress. *"I think people can live with what has happened, if they can see that they have a better future ahead of them. Because right now the future is looking very cringeful for most of the people"* (Person G). The level of the problems is rudimentary, and the amount of challenges is already high even despite the violence. Person G explains there is not enough food for everyone, and people are still dying from easily preventable diseases. This creates a feeling of hopelessness. *"I think accountability is something that needs to happen for the people to become vibrant and optimistic and positive but they need to see progress on the ground, and if they do that, I think anything can be possible. But right now, people are living in horrible conditions. And I think it is difficult to move forward if there is nothing to move forward to"* (Person G).

3.4 The Future of South Sudan

"The people of South Sudan live day to day. They are not people who think about tomorrow. Because of the danger level and malnourishment, they do not know if they are going to make it. They live very in the moment" (Person E).

3.4.1 Thoughts about the Government

The interviewees were asked about their thoughts concerning the government of South Sudan. All the interviewees expressed a lot of criticism. *"The 'development' that there has been in South Sudan after they became independent speaks a lot for the government itself. Country that has quite a lot of oil cannot keep one gas station open. I think that describes it quite well"* (Person B). That is to say, that there are a lot of natural resources inside the country yet none of those are spent on

supporting the development of South Sudan. *“They have their own oil, Nile goes through the country, they have a rain season that would make it possible for good agriculture maybe even three times per year – with that they could feed the whole Central Africa. It is very green out there. They could solve the watering systems even though it is very hot there. Fish from the Nile. Own oil. And still, they are that country in Africa that is doing the worst”* (Person B). Furthermore, Person G refers to the same examples about agriculture, oil, minerals, and other resources. *“There’s so much potential here but it’s so mismanaged. South Sudan is one of the worst indicated country in the world, it is the worst country in the world to live in but there is no reason for it to be that way but just because it is so mismanaged. And I think the government should do whatever is possible to ensure that we have sustainable peace”* (Person G). Many interviewees agree that the government is acting selfishly and not giving the priority for the right things. *“There haven’t been any concrete things that the current government would have done to improve the country”* (Person J). These missing improvements are making peace building difficult in South Sudan, and without peace, any further improvements are not going to happen. *“No one is interested in investing on South Sudan if there is no peace, why would I invest in a company that might be just bombed in pieces tomorrow. The government need to be accountable for their people, and I don’t think they are. And I think they are mismanaging the country and putting their political pride and the hunger for power in front of everything else, which I don’t think is fair”* (Person G).

Corruption was mentioned by some interviewees with examples from different levels. *“The government officers do not even live in South Sudan, they have nice houses in other countries while their own people are suffering with no food and water, and diseases all around. The government in my eyes – it is there, but non-existent. The corruption with the high officers is so prevalent, with police and correction officers – you can get out of everything with money”* (Person E). The positions that hold power are not pointed out fairly. There is no democracy in South Sudan. *“It is a highly corrupted system. The way the power works there is that only one can have a power, this is the structure, there is no democracy. And it is the same way on every level. The power is centralized on your relatives, clans and your own tribe, because those are the one that you trust – in other words, Dinkas”* (Person I). The way the government works is seen as one of the main reasons behind the conflicts in South Sudan. *“I see that the whole conflict in South Sudan is the consequence of the crisis and failure with leadership and political system. The power is absolutely very centralized, and the government has no power when there are ministers around. There is a lot of corruption and nepotism”* (Person H). However, despite all the expressed criticism towards the government, some interviewees wanted to remind that there are also positive matters. *“But I also*

want to say something positive, like I said the whole country is an example of a system that doesn't work, but I have to say there are still some brilliant individuals, in both government and in the ministries. Those who have very good education and a lot of capacity in many senses, and also good will and meaning to do something, but when the system doesn't work appropriately, the work can sometimes be very frustrating" (Person H).

The current President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar and their reigns were discussed. Few interviewees wondered whether new elections would bring any change to the country. Yet as its current form, it is not assumed to achieve peace. *"In the head of the government there are people who have done things, that the citizens will never forgive them. On the political level they can say whatever but not until these certain current leaders, also from the opposition, have left the government it is not going to happen. These two, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, they both needs to go. They both have done so evil things that before they are gone, there will be no improvement in the society"* (Person I). There are no clear rules about the length of one's reign, or possibly there is some appointed length, but that law is not followed respectably. *"There are some very 'African features' on it, I mean that many countries have had the same kind of journey in their histories that there is a temporary government that in the end keeps continuing and continuing. Salva Kiir just signed a new 3-year term. But I would see that new elections at this point would push the government into a new, horrible civil war again"* (Person C). Having new elections and new leaders might need some push and pressure from the international community, otherwise Salva Kiir keeps continuing his reign with assumedly empty promises. *"Maybe after these three years the new elections would be possible, but I am not sure whether Salva Kiir is willing to re-sign yet, I don't have enough hopes for the good in him anymore. The international community should show them some sort of support for the elections. But the elections are very sensitive, and I believe that it would be better if the executive power would come from the international communities on this matter. Somehow the same way that in Kosovo"* (Person C). On the other hand, the international community is already well-involved in the governing of South Sudan. *"From a professional point of view, I don't trust his [Salva Kiir's] ability to create any working solution for the citizens, that would help build up the country for a working society. International donors have made their own part in that they have brought huge systems into South Sudan that have increased the prices and that has made the international community as some sort of administrator but also some sort of protector of South Sudan"* (Person J).

Still, the conflict would not end only by having new elections, as there are many issues and levels entangled in the conflict. *"It is a totally corrupt government. It works that Salva Kiir is just*

trying to make his reign longer and takes advantage of those peace agreements that have been made over and over again and promises that the situation will get better and better, but like I said, the conflict is not that simple” (Person J). The conflict happens on a global, on a national and on a tribal level. “The global conflict is between China and the USA. The USA has been there for a long time and supports the opposition, if I may exacerbate it, and China cooperates with the government. Both countries are interested in oil, of course. Oil and minerals. And both these countries have their original level allies, Uganda and Sudan. And Uganda and Sudan are fighting about the original power and have fought for many years already. They are very tightly involved in this conflict” (Person I). The tip of the iceberg is the conflict between the citizens of South Sudan, the civil war. “And then on a lower level there are the tribes and clans. There are so many levels to this conflict. It is not easy to create a well-functioned government” (Person I).

One thing all the interviewees agreed: the conflict is complicated. As there are so many conflicting parties involved, there is not only one to blame for all. *“It is important to acknowledge things and not be blind about them, but nothing is really black and white. There was one bishop who said that we all have blood in our hands. When you think about all those decades that the conflict has been going on, you know that there is not one group that is totally innocent” (Person D).*

Interviewees were also asked what the locals’ thoughts regarding the government were. Some brought up that the opinion depends on what tribe the local belongs to, and the opinion is very divided between the major tribes. *“There is that government’s side with certain tribes but also some people who believe that the government is supporting their needs and therefore gives chances for them to drive their own personal needs. Then there is the opposition side with everyone else. Stereotypically we think that the opposition is all Dinka-tribe, and the government is all Nuer-tribe, but of course there are plenty of other tribes and groups as well” (Person D). For many tribes, the government has not done any good, and therefore the current peace agreements that the government has signed, are not making any difference. “They have been besieged for a long time by the government, they haven’t got any products there for months, markets are all poor, they’ve been strangled in many ways, they’ve gone through ethnic cleansing, they’re not going to leave from there anywhere. You may imagine what they think about the government” (Person I). However, the peace work between different tribes has created some results. “Then there are Shilluks, they have gone through the same. They were chased and killed, there were bodies for kilometers... Through the peace work, the dialogue between the government groups and Shilluks were strengthened by trying to make them understand that they are part of the same tribe, others are just in the bushes*

and others somewhere else. They both had the same goal in mind, they wanted to protect their groups" (Person I). Still, the challenges differ a lot depending on the tribe and on the area. *"The power needs to change. There is a huge distrust, and different problems and key challenges in different areas"* (Person I).

The distrust towards the government was mentioned by some other interviewees as well. *"I think people are delusional after so many years of war, I think the level of trust in this country in general is very low and not only with the government but with everyone. And that's what civil war does to a society; it really tears apart all the trust that was"* (Person G). However, the hope does not seem to be absent even if the trust is. *"I think people are fed up and so tired with conflict, and they try to remain hopeful and be optimistic. And I don't really know where they get that strength. But of course, they have lived through all the setbacks and I wouldn't say that they are overly optimistic and would have much faith in the government, but they do try to look on the bright side of things, and I admire that"* (Person G). There are some newly done actions by the government, that have brought some hope for the citizens. *"I have to admit that the locals' trust and belief in all political leaders has broken down throughout the past years. But I think that now there is this [peace] contract, and the politicians have committed to some contract, the locals view them slightly more positively as they are noticing that they are finally doing something good for this country"* (Person H). However, building up the trust and relationship between the politicians and citizens will take time and effort for a long time. *"But altogether the trust has totally gone down throughout the years, and when we are talking about the reconciliation, I think also there needs to be done some reconciliation between the citizens and the political leaders in the future"* (Person H).

3.4.2 Thoughts about the Future of South Sudan

Thoughts about the future of South Sudan regarding the conflict were asked from the interviewees. Some remained more hopeful than others. Person A sees the change of the generation to another as the road for a better future. *"The children have seen their mothers raped, fathers killed... or they have been forced to rape their sisters and mothers in gunpoint. These children are traumatized. And these children grow up during the war, in the military system"* (Person A). Some of these children has now grown up and become military officers or governmental officials. They have not received any treatment for their traumas. *"The reality is, they need rehabilitation. But because this is not happening, you can see that people behave according to their past – what they have seen, they are doing it now. They become aggressive. It is a cycle. You do the same things to your children that your parents have done to you. So this current generation is sick and we need to wait for the*

generation to change. So that new generation can create a new life. Things will change" (Person A). In addition, person A hopes that those South Sudanese people, who have fled the country and educated themselves, would return to South Sudan. *"They should teach the new youths to take over the old, wicked generation. They should not go there as politicians and government officials, but as teachers"* (Person A). Some other interviewees also brought up the issue of inter-generational challenges. *"Even if the war or the conflicts ended in South Sudan, it wouldn't end the cycle of revenge for a long time, there would be clashes between the different clans in the tribes, and between tribes... They continue telling those stories to their children and children's children about how some other tribe killed someone from our family, and then these children will keep up the revenge themselves. It is very deeply ingrained"* (Person I).

What makes the views pessimistic with many interviewees, is the complexity of the conflict. Instead of just two parties clashing, the civil war of South Sudan is extremely multi-dimensional. There are countries and businesses that benefit financially from the war. *"The thing is, there are so many different conflicts on different levels. To get everyone around the same table is not going to happen anytime soon. Some benefit a lot from the conflict, some are being supported financially about keeping the conflict going because they are in certain areas, where others cannot come to drill the oil"* (Person I). One interviewee sees the DDR (disarmament, demobilization, re-integration) and security reform as some solutions for the conflict, and wonders how those processes remain undone in South Sudan. *"China is one big actor in it. The security on camps is under China's responsibility, they have most of the peacekeepers there. China is strong in the oil industry and in infrastructure. China is a member of the Security Council. China has a strong interest in Africa for collecting minerals and taking them to China"* (Person C). Furthermore, Person C assumes that Salva Kiir likely gets some part of that money for himself. It is difficult to create change for the situation as the power in the United Nations is shared between the same countries that are involved with South Sudan. *"And if a country has some minerals, it should be getting forward – not backwards as South Sudan does. So if South Sudan stabilized, it would mean bad business for China. These are energy-political issues that somewhat stop the re-building processes to go true in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. China says no, and probably also Russia. USA is in South Sudan"* (Person C).

In addition, Sudan plays a strong role in South Sudan's economy. *"The problem is that Sudan has still lot to do in South Sudan and because of the international business interests, South Sudan doesn't have much autonomy and they cannot make decisions based on their own resources, because 50% of their income goes to Sudan and their economy is doing badly because of the*

corruption” (Person J). Different countries and businesses are tied to each other through many different types of projects and trading. This kind of multi-dimensional cooperation has enabled the conflict to keep going for decades. “The international work has been somewhat like that, which has made me feel my work quite unethical or immoral sometimes. There are countries that can sell weapons first for the government forces, then for the opposition forces, and then also fund peace work, all at the same time. And then some countries support certain sides just because of their own interests for oil or jewelry or such” (Person D).

One interviewee argued that the international organizations are enabling the conflict in some level as well. *“NGOs and UN think that they are doing so much good here and that they are saving the country, they are actually ruining the economics here” (Person F). An example of Rwanda is brought up, and Person F explains how the NGOs had left the country which had resulted in the way that the citizens of Rwanda had needed to start working for their nation by themselves. “And now they are doing very well! But here in South Sudan, as long as the NGOs are feeding the locals with the spoon, they do not need to think about their own country with their own brains and nothing will change in the situation. I think that people need to be helped when they need help, but here they are overly helped. The current system does not in any way encourage locals to work themselves” (Person F). Few interviewees expressed their frustration with the work with the UN and felt that the processes were slow and not efficient enough, which is why the hope for a better future in South Sudan is relatively small. “I did not see any change in the situation myself, which is why I started doing other things there as a volunteer, because I got so frustrated. In my home country, I can see things going forward all the time, but what comes to South Sudan, I feel like things are just getting worse. So in my lifetime, I do not see any changes in South Sudan. It has not been as violent since 2013 when the last conflict was” (Person E).*

Many interviewees point out the contradiction that there are resources and money in South Sudan, yet it does not benefit the country itself at all. *“If they would get the economy on a better level, if there were responsible investing in the country, if people who have power would redirect the income from oil into something better... the government should be held accountable for its responsibilities. Because there is money!” (Person J). Considering the current situation, person J assumes that there will not be any major changes for the sufferings for the next 10-20 years. And like several other interviewees, person J thinks that if the war between central governing stops at some point, it will very likely open up again at some level.” And then there will always be some spoilers. After every conflict, even if the process would start going well, there are always some*

groups that will try to break it for their own purposes, and in South Sudan there are definitely going to be those. Then it is up to the government to stick together and take care of that“ (Person I).

There is no doubt within the interviewees, that South Sudan would need some big changes in many different areas. *“If there was a solution for the leadership, that the government and opposition would change totally and all the tribes would agree on some cooperation, I’m sure they would get it working someway” (Person I).* On a positive note, person I sees that there have been some promising signs compared to the past few years. Still, it cannot be forgotten that there have been many empty promises and agreements as well, which is why trust is difficult for South Sudanese. *“Some will stay at the refugee camps in Sudan or other countries until they will return, and until they come back, some are going to stay in bushes and wait for their families. I don’t want to be a pessimist, but they are going to need some big changes” (Person I).* Furthermore, the whole political system would need a repairment. *“If there comes no total change for the system, this circle just keeps going on and on. It doesn’t help to just change these two main leaders if the system is weak and broken. That would just mean that there are new leaders, and the same game keeps going on” (Person J).* The societal structures should be re-created and strengthened before it is possible to start building up a peaceful future in South Sudan. That suggests that peace may not be possible in the near future. *“You don’t build a state in a moment, and as long as there are no clear structures in the state, it will be extremely difficult to develop anything sustainable, to have security, or to maintain peace. Plus, there are generations that were born or have grown up during the conflict, and the trauma that it has left, especially considering the way the conflict has been... Challenges are remarkable” (Person H).*

Although all the interviewees described multiple challenges that are stopping South Sudan from achieving peace, most of the interviewees remained hopeful. *“I think if you are working in South Sudan, you kind of have to remain hopeful and believe in peace, otherwise there’s no real point for working. But it is a mixed bag. We see that there are some areas opening up as a consequence of the peace process, which is great. But we also see that there are new tensions building up in other parts of the country” (Person G).* As a one example of the mentioned tensions, person G explains that no one knows when Riik Machar will return to South Sudan and what kind of consequences will that case bring along. *“So I mean, we are kind of hopeful because we see some positive development in the country, but we also know that one of the more important moments is yet to come. So we are holding our breaths, hoping for the best, but also looking back on the history, being realistic and also planning for the worst” (Person G).* Bringing attention also to the positive sides of South Sudan is seen as important as talking about the challenges. *“At the same time, there*

is a lot of good in South Sudan. Great individuals who have a lot of patience, there are resilient communities, there are a lot of people who could have left the country but instead chose to stay and wanted to have their home in South Sudan and it that way builds something good for the country” (Person H). Furthermore, remembering that there are a lot of resources in the country is a good base for building up the society. *“There are a lot of resources in the country, oil is one of those, but it has been used for quite a while already. Talking about biodiversity, South Sudan is one of the richest countries in the world. I just think it is important to pay attention to the good sides in the country as well”* (Person H).

In addition to all the help coming from outside, true peace can only be achieved in South Sudan if the citizens truly want it and are willing to work for it. *“The country has a long and difficult road ahead. But we always kept saying there that ‘peace is possible.’ South Sudan is not doomed. But peace is only possible if the people want it. We outsiders can only do as much, the locals need to be the willing force for the peace”* (Person D). Bringing everyone around the same table is efficient only if different parties are ready to discuss and cooperate. *“And if they decide in a negotiation table that instead of discussing it is better to fight, then we can’t do anything about that. But there is definitely hope for South Sudan. The sustainable peace will not come through the outsiders, it requires the work and will from South Sudan”* (Person D).

Interviewees were also asked what the locals’ thoughts regarding the future of South Sudan are. *“They don’t really have the concept of the future. Many times, when I have asked locals what their thoughts are about the future, they ask ‘what do you mean?’. They don’t have that concept, that time frame in their lives. Because they haven’t been able to plan for the future, what they have today might be taken away tomorrow. So I think as human beings we are incredible in adjusting to situations like this. I think it is a survival mechanism”* (Person G). Similar answers were received from many other interviewees, and in particular the concept of “living in a moment” was brought up several times. *“The way of living in South Sudan is more like living day by day. They just try to survive one week at a time. But some individuals were still hopeful about the future, and some were thinking about the future and were trying to re-build and better their own position and conditions”* (Person C). Using energy for planning the future is often seen as pointless as situations can change so rapidly. Some remain hopeful yet this depends a lot on the current life situation and on the level of security. *“Like I said, they live day to day, so they do not think about the future. But maybe those who live with their families and their children are safe, they are probably thinking about the future for their children, and I think they want to be hopeful. Most of the people just think that this is the way life is because they have always lived in conflict”* (Person E). Another aspect, that affects the

mindset is how aware one is about the current situation in South Sudan, and which part of the country you live in. The illiteracy rate is high, and most people have no access to the internet. *“So you might find people in more remote areas or in areas where they have been peaceful for some time, they would probably be more optimistic. But if you look at the people around for example around Yei where it is really starting to build up, I don’t think that they are very hopeful. I think it really depends on your perspective, where you are in the country and what’s your situation”* (Person G). In addition, person G compares South Sudan to France as they are the same size in map. *“With poor connection it is like someone in Normandie wouldn’t necessarily know what is happening in Paris”* (Person G). Information does not travel fast or at all inside the country.

Respect and admiration towards South Sudanese are shared among the interviewees. Many of them are amazed about the strength that locals have. *“I’m wondering about the level of stress there. I’m wondering how they have the energy to keep going. And there are those people. I wonder how we could get them to lead the country”* (Person B). One example, where the locals have got some strength and hope, is the church. During the civil war, South Sudanese have not been fighting because of the religions, which is why religions have been seen as an empowering element during the conflict. *“People are somewhat hopeful though, and through my job I have seen how religions can bring some security and belief for a better future, and to realize that our destiny in this planet is not this fighting but instead something better, and that is what people are resorting into. In that people find church to be a good place to look for and maintain that hope and comfort. There I really see church as an important factor when everything else has failed”* (Person D). Hope and strength are found in different places with different people. Some have been able to have an education and work, and some with more money have been able to start building their houses in Uganda or in Kenya with the plan on moving there later with their family. Some have lost their lives. *“But there is some weird energy that they all have and that keeps them positive. They are always able to find positivity in every community. But the long-term planning is about where you will find a safe place, and where you will find a good place for children to grow up”* (Person J). Resilience is evident among the locals yet the line between having strength and coping, and between numbness and not caring anymore can sometimes be a bit unsteady. *“Totally awful things happen, but people are good at bouncing back after those incidents. And that is both a good and bad thing. Bad is that then death becomes such a normal thing, it doesn’t shock you anymore and then you just leave it behind”* (Person J).

Not all have been able to keep up the hope for a better future and many have given up on their dreams and hopes when everything in life has betrayed them. Interviewees describe these moments

tough and sad, yet understandable. Person D talks about those South Sudanese, who held a good job or career for example with the UN, but who at some point got enough of everything and decided to leave that job and join the fights. *“It is so hopeless from time to time that at some point you just have had enough for trying. It tells quite a lot about the situation if a person is ready to leave their job and salaries and their possibilities for feeding their families. And thinks that it is a better option to join the fights and set the family at risk”* (Person D). There are huge reasons behind these decisions and moments that create the feeling of hopelessness among South Sudanese. *“It is difficult for them to think that politicians would think about the citizens or the country instead of themselves. These leaders have failed them so many times, so many people have died and so many have been raped. Everyone has lost relatives and property there... Deep wounds”* (Person I). The trauma and long-lasting conflict have decreased hope and blurred the future view. *“Everyone who has been born after the 1950s, has seen only the life in conflicts and therefore does not know about anything else. The conflict is their way of life. That makes them think a certain way about other people or about the world”* (Person D). This is the problem of prolonged conflicts. Person D describes some experiences from some European conferences, where some of person D’s South Sudanese co-workers had attended. Those trips outside South Sudan had been huge turning points for them. *“They said that now they understand what peace means, and what it is to walk on the streets without fear. People who haven’t seen anything other than war don’t understand what peace is and what it means. They don’t know what they’re missing. Therefore, it’s difficult to get them engaged into peace building. It’s difficult to aim for something when you’re really not sure what you’re aiming for, you don’t know what the dream about a better life is”* (Person D).

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Findings

In South Sudan, sexual violence has been highly prevalent. Both interviewees and reference reminded that having the correct data about the events of sexual violence is seemingly difficult due to the silence, stigma, and shame around the topic, and due to the challenges regarding reporting. The suggested reasons behind the prevalence were somewhat corroborated between the interviewees and the research: long history with the conflicts, intergenerational traumas, patriarchal values, the culture of impunity, weapon of war, an inadequate criminal justice system, inter-ethnic relations, the circle of revenge, and the cattle trading. In addition, some interviewees highlighted the long-lasting violence that has normalized the use of sexual violence, pondered whether media gives an exaggerated picture of the prevalence of sexual violence, and expressed that the reasons for the high amount of sexual violence are complex and multifaceted.

Services for the survivors of sexual violence are poor and there are challenges with the accessibility. Interviewees expressed a high need for the professional and psychological help, yet mentioned some other examples how South Sudanese women have coped with the emotional traumas, including practices such as storytelling, peer support, and theatre. Medical and physical help is more available, but that is offered mainly in the urban areas of the country. NGOs or UN organizations organize and offer both the psychological and physical help because the state-based services are not functioning. The low illiteracy rate and services that were offered only in English made some interviewees concerned that locals had problems understanding what the services were offering. Judicial services regarding sexual violence are almost non-existent. Both the reference and the interviewees brought up the difficulties with these judicial services: lack of reporting, lack of trust for the officials, and lack of belief for having a fair process. The interviewees called South Sudan's justice system as broken and reminded that the customary courts are preferred over the official courts. There are either no consequences for the perpetrators at all, or the consequences are so mild that they do not harm the perpetrator but instead the victims. The culture of impunity was mentioned by both the interviewees and the reference.

Reference is clear with stating that sexual violence has been used strategically as a war weapon in South Sudan. Among the interviewees, the views were divided into those who said that sexual violence has been used as a strategy of war, and those who doubted that sexual violence would have been strategic but still a war weapon. The examples given by interviewees supporting that sexual

violence was strategic were that soldiers were drugged and commanded to rape, the effectiveness of sexual violence, the systematic continuation of the gang rapes, and the power-control relations. The skepticism by few interviewees towards the strategic point of sexual violence was due to the weak cohesion in the groups that were scattered and unorganized.

The interviewees were not hopeful for having an accountability in South Sudan in the near future as all of them made it completely clear how dominant the impunity in South Sudan currently is. However, several interviewees brought up the possibility of having some sort of criminal tribunal or truth commission in South Sudan, as a solution for enhancing the accountability. The retributive and restorative models were discussed by the interviewees, and compromises between these two models were suggested. Reference, especially UN related literature, was slightly supporting the retributive model yet some aspects from the restorative model were still brought up. Many interviewees were critical about the suitability of having a Western-like court system in South Sudan. Likewise, the reference emphasized the imperative need for inclusive participation of the locals and local traditions when working with the transitional justice system. For whom to sentence in the courts, no one was sure about. Both an interviewee and reference stressed that those high-level chiefs and commanders will not end war unless they get full amnesty. Interviewees reflected that investigating old crimes and sentencing perpetrators from the battles would be challenging afterwards considering the character of the long-lasting conflict. Still, both the interviewees and the reference expressed that punishing the perpetrators for the offenses was seen as the right thing to do in the sense of setting an example, as well as for the remedial purpose for the survivors and their healing process.

Views on what would strengthen the community and positive peace in South Sudan's future when it comes to tackling sexual violence are a bit dissenting. There is a strong view among the interviewees and the reference, that impunity will not disappear unless perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. This would strengthen the accountability by setting a clear message for the community: sexual violence is a crime, it is a wrong thing to do, and there will be judicial consequences for those who do not understand this. Still, how this would be organized in practice is a complex issue that everyone just seems to have guesses about. The reference suggests making the work strategic, with a regular follow-up and evaluation. Forgiveness is still needed for the peaceful future in South Sudan, but both the interviewees and the reference do not support it to be the only option, but rather an addition to the accountability work in the sense of reconciliation. Also, South Sudan needs improvement in other sectors as well so that sexual violence – and the whole conflict – could end. Interviewees stressed that education, humanitarian needs (food, medicine) and economy

are also important things to improve. Political will and good management would be the key factors for this, as there is a lot of potential in South Sudan when considering the resources (such as oil, minerals, biodiversity). Still, interviewees reminded that the conflicts in South Sudan are so complex and on so many different levels, that solving all those will be highly difficult. All in all, both the interviewees and the reference were strongly emphasizing that whatever the way to the peace in South Sudan is, women need to be included in the progress in every level of work.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

This study could have been done with a quantitative method as well, yet it is important to get a deeper understanding of the sexual violence than purely as a “numbers issues”. Through qualitative methods the true nature of sexual violence and its ramifications for individuals, families and communities were easier to capture. However, the exact numbers of the prevalence of sexual violence in South Sudan is unknown, and due to the silence and shame around the topic, it is nearly impossible to get the actual numbers for the amount of cases. Some estimated numbers were found by the literature review.

Due to the on-going conflict in South Sudan, it would have been dangerous for the researcher to travel there to conduct the interviews with locals, which is why the workers who had been or were currently in South Sudan were interviewed instead. With the sensitivity of the subject in mind, there would have been challenges in achieving the trust between the researcher and the locals, and thus interviewing about the experiences about sexual violence would have not possibly given the correct or rightful picture about the truth. The interviews without an offer for further help in these situations would have been unethical and disrespectful in the face of traumas and experiences of the sexual violence survivors.

4.3 Implications of the Study

To tackle the root causes for sexual violence, more education is needed about gender equality in South Sudan. This study points out many of the needs that South Sudan has regarding the services for the sexual violence survivors. Interviewees suggest these services to have more funding, and to make them more accessible for everyone. Trauma management is needed in communities in order to break the intergenerational violence and the cycle of revenge. Women must be included in the peace-building process in all possible levels.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Research

After the interviews were done, the situation in South Sudan has changed a bit as the transitional justice process is started. The functionality and consequences of the justice process would be interesting to research about. Also, an interviewee mentioned “DDR-process” (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) as a possibility to affect positively on the conflict in South Sudan. To research whether it was possible to tackle sexual violence as a war strategy by using DDR-process might give new tools for combating conflict-related sexual violence.

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Appendix A

Interview Scheme

1. How would you describe your time in South Sudan?
2. Were people openly talking about sexual violence, or was the culture of silence prevalent?
3. During your time in SS, how was sexual violence presence in the community?
 - a. What kind of sexual violence?
 - b. Who was targeted?
 - c. Was some specific group of people (ethnic, religious etc.) targeted more than others?
 - d. Was some specific group of people committing it more than others?
 - e. Prevalence?
 - f. Did it happen in private setting or in public?
 - g. Was the pattern of sexual violence strategic? How?
 - h. Did you meet victims?
 - i. Did you hear stories of events from other people?
 - j. Did you meet perpetrators?
4. Did you see/hear about any victim support services?
5. Did you hear about any judicial or other consequences for the perpetrators?
6. What do you think explains the high prevalence of sexual violence in South Sudan?
7. Do you see it possible, that perpetrators would be held accountable some day in South Sudan?
8. What are your thoughts about the government? What were the locals' thoughts about the government?
9. What are your thoughts about the future of South Sudan (regarding the conflict)? What were the locals' thoughts?

In addition, for the last few interviews following questions were added:

10. To have a peaceful future in South Sudan, do you think it would be better to forgive the perpetrators of the sexual violence, or should all of them be held accountable and punished?
11. Some have argued that people of South Sudan would work for building the peace harder if UN agencies and NGOs stopped “pampering” them so much and instead left them to create the solutions for the problems by themselves. What do you think?