



# THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

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## ***POLICY BRIEF***

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### **Peace-building in South Sudan through the Design and Implementation of Coherent and Integrated Youth Development Policy<sup>1</sup>**

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#### **Summary**

- *This paper argues that South Sudanese youth are integral to peace-building in this country because they constitute an overwhelming majority of the population who are socially and economically underdeveloped and therefore vulnerable to engaging in political violence whenever attracted by ethnic warlords and other conflict entrepreneurs.*
- *To reverse this course and instead promote sustainable peace and development in the country, there is an urgent need for the government of South Sudan and development partners to positively and effectively engage the youth in order to foster their social and economic development.*
- *While the government of South Sudan has put on paper some excellent strategic development frameworks, including the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) 2011-2018 and Vision 2040, both of which could promote social and economic development of youth, among other national priorities enumerated, it is evident that the government has not been able to fully commit to implementation of these policies.*
- *Government's inability to commit to implementation emanates from four key factors: Lack of capacity within the Government of South Sudan, which has often led to poor programs design and inefficient service delivery; lack of political will from the ruling elites who have continued to embezzle public funds unrestrained since 2005; misalignment of national priorities over the last 10 years which has in effect consistently confined the social sector budget near the bottom; and the negative traditional, patriarchal cultural attitudes of the older generation—most of them in key government positions—who do not value youth for the great resource they are to this country but view them as mute agents who should quietly wait for “their time” to eventually enter that magical old-age where great things just happen.*
- *In light of the above challenges to South Sudanese youth, and consequently peace-building and sustainable development of the country, it is critically important that the government and development partners jointly design and implement a youth development policy that is both coherent and universally integrated.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Sudd Institute acknowledges the financial support provided by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through its Democracy and Participation Program.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. John Garang De Mabior and many of his contemporaries were products of strategic investments made by Anyana I leadership to send these promising young men back to school and seek educational opportunities abroad. As well, Pagan Amum Okiech, Deng Alor Kuol, Nhial Deng Nhial, Oyai Deng Ajak, Pieng Deng Kuol, and Dr. Majak Agoot among others, most of who have been dubbed as

## 1 Introduction

South Sudan's youth are pivotal to peace-building and sustainable development, given that they make an overwhelming majority of the population. According to South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (2008), 51% and 72% of South Sudanese are aged below 24 and 30, respectively. These statistics unequivocally indicate that South Sudan is demographically a young nation and that all meaningful efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace and promoting sustainable development in the country must place this key demographic group at the epicenter.

However, a number of studies and surveys on the condition of youth in South Sudan have demonstrated that the national development policy has largely neglected this key population group. Consequently, most of the country's youth are disillusioned, desperately endeavoring for decent employment and other meaningful opportunities to engage themselves and fulfill their aspirations. In one of the surveys (Mercy Corps 2014), a South Sudanese youth eloquently captured this pervasive sense of disenchantment among his peers:

South Sudan isn't like other countries. Other countries have two-way streets, multiple lanes and you can arrive where you're trying to go. Here, streets are one-way, one lane and you always end up at a dead end or are told you're going the wrong way. Life is like that for youth in South Sudan - there are lots of dead ends and you have to turn back and start again.

This paper addresses key failures by the Government of South Sudan to effectively engage and adequately plan for its most valuable resource, the youth. In exploring these failures, we highlight some historic contributions made by young people<sup>2</sup> (starting from the time of Anyanya I Movement, all the way to SPLA/M War of Liberation) that eventually ushered South Sudan into independence on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We examine, in particular, key strategies and programs that the two successive South Sudanese independence movements (Anyanya I and SPLA/M) used to effectively engage and leverage young people's contributions to the larger national vision; past strategies and programs that the Government of South Sudan should have built upon to empower and unleash the potential of its present-day youth. The Red Army and Face Foundation sub-movements of the SPLA/M are just a few of these successful past strategies and programs.

Finally, we recommend strategies and priority areas in which the Government of South Sudan and her development partners should invest to promote cohesive and integrated youth development policy which would in turn lead to lasting peace and sustainable development in the country.

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## 2 Key Terms and Definitions

**Youth:** Although the definition of youth varies from country to country and institution to institution, this paper employs that of the African Youth Charter which classifies youth as men and women aged between 15 and 35 years. But because “youth” is not a static but dynamic stage in life, it is almost impossible to entirely exclude from this discussion those aged below 15 as they are inevitably the youth of tomorrow.

**Peace-building:** While this is a broad concept defined differently by scholars and stakeholders, it is widely understood as “an endeavor aiming to create sustainable peace by addressing root causes of violent conflict and eliciting indigenous capacities for peaceful management and resolution of conflict” (Duke 2009).

Similarly, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development defines peace-building as a set of strategic initiatives and objectives including “activities designed to prevent conflict through addressing structural and proximate causes of violence, promoting sustainable peace, delegitimizing violence as a dispute resolution strategy, building capacity within society to peacefully manage disputes, and reducing vulnerability to triggers that may spark violence” (Alliance for Peace-building 2015).

**Sustainable Development:** A developmental approach that addresses the unique challenges of the present without jeopardizing the needs of future generations (Emas 2015).

**Coherent Policy:** The DAC Journal for Co-operation Development maintains that “Policy coherence means different policy communities working together in ways that result in more powerful tools and products for all concerned. It means looking for synergies and complementarities and filling gaps among different policy areas so as to meet common and shared objectives” (OECD 2015).

**Integrated Policy:** A multi-dimensional policy approach that holistically addresses various aspects relevant to tackling a particular problem.

## 3 Theoretical Framework

The central argument of this paper is built on two seemingly opposed but complimentary, theoretical viewpoints. The first theoretical approach envisages youth population as a major liability for which any nation must adequately plan to avoid undesirable social and political consequences, such as unrests that often arise, especially in developing, post-conflict environments (Beehner 2007). This theoretical approach postulates that surge in youth population inevitably leads to competition over limited resources such as employment and other basic social services, creating “disaffection” and making youth highly vulnerable to engaging in violence once ignited by ethnic zealots, religious fanatics, and other conflict entrepreneurs. This theoretical model may explain why on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2013, for example, a political wrangling within South Sudan’s ruling SPLM party, pitting actors from diverse ethnic groups against each other, could easily spark unprecedented level of violence in Juba and quickly spread to the rural Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States, triggering longstanding ethnic animosities between the Dinkas and Nuers.

The second theoretical model, on the other hand, champions youth as invaluable resource who, when properly engaged and adequately planned for, have the regenerative power and

creative potential to help societies and countries leap forward. This theoretical model is best captured by a World Bank (2009) report entitled “Youth and Employment in Africa: The Potential, the Problem, the Promise” which articulates:

The energy, skills and aspirations of young people are invaluable assets that no country can afford to squander, and helping them to realize their full potential by gaining access to employment is a precondition for poverty eradication, sustainable development, and lasting peace.

Thus, weaving a fine line between these two seemingly disparate but complimentary theoretical models on youth, this paper paints a strategic roadmap for peace-building and sustainable development in South Sudan. This strategic roadmap hinges on the need to create safety nets for vulnerable youth, particularly those in rural areas, while at the same time promoting broad-based engagement opportunities to fully harness the potential of all youth across the country, thereby transforming them into powerful agents of peace and engines for positive social, political, and economic transformations.

#### **4 Background and Significance**

As South Sudan emerges from the worst internal conflict ever since its independence, and plans are underway for the implementation of IGAD-Plus Compromise Peace Agreement, it is worth noting that genuine efforts aimed at building lasting peace in the country must go beyond the simplistic power sharing ratio that is primarily the exploit of the minority political elites. Instead, genuine peace-building efforts must place at their center the development of this nation’s youth who make an overwhelming majority of the population. As noted earlier in the introductory section, over 72 percent of South Sudan’s population is aged below 30; and when we weigh in other relevant statistical elements such as 83 percent of total population being rural, with 73 percent deriving their livelihoods mainly from agriculture—one of South Sudan’s most neglected, underperforming sectors of the economy—we draw the inevitable conclusion that South Sudan’s youth are indeed the most disadvantaged population group without which redress would continue to post significant challenges to all vital peace-building efforts, including the IGAD-Plus Compromise Peace Agreement that South Sudan’s warring factions have just signed.

Also worth noting is that a critical analysis of the performance of the government of South Sudan over the last ten years suggests that investment in this important demographic group (youth), which is pivotal to peace-building and sustainable development, will continue to flounder and rank at the bottom of the national priorities as has been the case since 2005. Since 2005, for instance, the government of South Sudan’s funding for the education, social, and development sectors has been disappointingly low (i.e., less than 13% of the national budget), with much of the rest covering salaries and the security sector (NBS 2012). This low prioritization of key social and development sectors by the government has continued unabated in spite of the launch of two important strategic development initiatives, Vision 2040 and South Sudan Development Plan, both of which if fully implemented, would have sufficiently addressed major issues affecting youth and impeding the achievement of lasting peace and sustainable development in the country.

This inability of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to commit to its articulated vision and development plans is rooted in four key factors:

- a) Lack of capacity within the ranks and files of the Government of South Sudan which in turn results in lack of systematic planning, programming and evaluation of development projects, most of which could largely benefit the youth of this nation. This lack of capacity within the government has been widely articulated by experts and practitioners such as Deng (2013) and has even been acknowledged by the government itself (Government of South Sudan 2011).
- b) Lack of political will from the ruling elites who, partly because of lack of accountability systems, have continued to enjoy unlimited access to public coffers<sup>3</sup> since 2005, thereby wedging a huge class divide between them and the rest of the society. As a result, the ruling elites have been out of touch, utterly blind and insensitive to the needs of the general population, youth in particular.
- c) Misalignment of national priorities for much of the last 10 years. As mentioned previously, critical analysis of the national budget over the last 10 years illustrates that South Sudan's national priorities have been consistently misconstrued, often resulting in the social and development sector budgets falling at the bottom, and finally,
- d) Older generation's negative patriarchal cultural attitudes towards youth and their role in social transformation and nation-building. Dr. Dau Col Dau Diing, a young medical practitioner and moderator of South Sudan Development Policy Forum had this to say about the older generation's negative patriarchal attitudes presently incapacitating youth (Personal Communications, September 6 2015):

I do not currently feel that South Sudanese youth are seen as equal citizens in our country. Whether they have been devalued in our society is more difficult to say definitively...The unquestioning traditional patriarchal and age-stratified social structures that we have within our nation, with its unrivaled respect and privileges it emboldens upon elders, have contributed to this.

Thus, with these deeply engrained self-serving cultural norms and societal attitudes that cherish the old while portraying youth as largely inconsequential, hence with little say on social and national matters, it is understandable why the ruling elites have had to focus on maintaining the status quo instead of investing in the youth so as to empower them to take charge and ownership for the future.

## **5 Building on Past Successes (1955-2011): Contributions of Youth to Historic Founding of South Sudan**

Contrary to today's chauvinistic attitudes of the elders and political elites towards youth, which has been manifested from 2005 to present, there exists a number of historical evidence that South Sudan's youth have been an integral part of—if not the driving force behind—the historic founding of this young nation. Historical evidence indicates that whenever South Sudanese youth are offered a worthwhile vision to strive for, they tend to excel by far; that they give it their best shot and pursue it with an over-arching sense of commitment and

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<sup>3</sup> In 2012, President Kiir sent letters to 75 top South Sudanese officials, accused of embezzling 4.2 Billion USD, urging them to return the fund; a move that was covered by BBC News and other national media such as Paanluel and South Sudan Vision Daily, among others

purpose. For instance, of the 1,146 Southern Soldiers who mutinied in Torit in 1955 and paved way for the first Southern Revolution, 380 (33%) were “boy soldiers” (Human Rights Watch 1994)<sup>4</sup>. Although Dr. John Garang De Mabior, later a founding member and Chairman of the SPLM/A, did not join the Torit Mutiny in 1955, he was among the cohorts of youth (boy soldiers) who later joined the Anyanya I movement. He and his cohorts voluntarily abandoned their studies in early 1960s to join Anyanya I, the first Southern Revolution that had been brought to dawn by the 1955 Torit mutiny.

Appreciative of these young men’s motivation but also mindful of their potentials for the future, the leaders of Anyanya I quickly released John Garang with a number of his cohorts, sending them abroad to pursue educational opportunities which the Anyanya I Movement considered instrumental to the eventual success of the “Southern Vision.”

It was not surprising, therefore, that in 1984 Joseph Oduho, a veteran Southern politician, rallied major support for the endorsement of Dr. John Garang, who had just turned 38 and with a PhD from the U.S., to lead the second Southern Revolution, the SPLM/A. Joseph Oduho and many other veteran politicians preferred Dr. John Garang for the top job primarily because of Garang’s relatively young age and educational achievements, two attributes these veteran politicians considered key to selling the SPLM/A vision at home and abroad (Kuyok 2015).

Hence, when Dr. John Garang ascended to power in 1984, he was deeply conscious of the role the young people, especially the educated ones, could play in thrusting forward a powerful “people’s vision.” As a result, the SPLM/A quickly pursued an aggressive youth engagement and empowerment strategy, identifying, training and mentoring a cadre of promising youngsters from diverse ethnic backgrounds, most of whom had dropped out of secondary schools and universities. It was out of this pool of young talents that future military commanders and administrative officers of the fledgling visionary SPLM/A—majority of whom are now at the helm of this troubled ruling party—were sourced and groomed<sup>5</sup>. There, then, followed the development of the Red Army Movement, an ideological concept that embraced the youth as the backbones of the movement and heirs of the New Sudan. It was out of this spellbinding ideological vision that tens of thousands of Southern Sudanese youth voluntarily joined the SPLM/A movement, flocking to Ethiopia and Palotaka, Moli Tokuro and Bolongore Face Foundations, among other hubs, in search of education and other opportunities to engage themselves and contribute to the cause of Southern Sudan.

Today, however, it is apparent that that once riveting ideological vision, championed by Dr. John Garang and his predecessors, which positioned youth as the foundation upon which the

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<sup>4</sup> Although this Human Rights Watch’s report views that large percentage of boy-soldiers among the Torit Mutiniers within the limited spectacles of child abuse and human rights violation, South Sudan’s history (written and oral) seems to suggest otherwise. Those “boy soldiers” who joined the Sudanese army before 1955 did so out of choice, as that was the most valuable option available to them given that most of them lacked education. Also, those who subsequently joined the Torit Mutiny in 1955 did so voluntarily and out of sacrifice for their region, in fulfillment of the “Southern Vision” pioneered arguably by William Deng Nhial and extended by the courageous and charismatic Father Saturino and General Joseph Lagu.

<sup>5</sup> Pagan Amum, Oyai Deng Ajak, Majak Agoot, Obutu Mamur Mete, Nhial Deng Nhial, James Hoth Mai, and Deng Alor Kuol, among others, were beneficiaries of Dr. John Garang’s keen interest in youth as well as continual training and development for greater roles and assignments within the movement.

New Sudan would be built, was quickly trashed as soon as the CPA was signed and the Government of Southern Sudan established in 2005. In fact, the prevailing sentiment among former members of the Red Army and Face Foundation, majority of whom were inspired by the initial SPLM/A vision for the youth, is a deep sense of betrayal and exploitation. Many of these youth feel that the ruling elites, who have incredibly benefitted from that well-crafted highly orchestrated youth investment program which was trumpeted by Dr. John Garang and his predecessors, quickly turned their back to that important ideal as soon as they set their feet in Juba. One may wonder why, and how possible, these former youth, now turned elders and elites, who had made a great sacrifice for their people could so quickly divorce from such an important ideal—investment in the future—that had served them so well?

A confluence of factors beyond the scope of this paper would account for this, but two factors are apt within this context: 1) The extractive as opposed to industrial nature of South Sudan’s oil-based economy which, as far back as 2005, created the “lazy money syndrome,” hence an impetus for empire-building amongst the elites, and 2) The tragic reality that many of the current political elites were initially driven by opportunism, and not by altruism and sacrifice for their countrymen. These two factors could explain why, as soon as Dr. John Garang, the engine behind the SPLM/A vision for the youth and the New Sudan, died in 2005, there was very little incentive for the current political elites to continue in his footsteps; for they (elites) had finally arrived at the promised land where they could effortlessly, and abundantly, meet their own social, political, and economic self-interests.

Hence, to tighten their grip on power, and the social and economic opportunities it avails, these political elites have expediently employed the “age” factor as their core winning strategy, often condescendingly brushing off highly driven, aspiring youth as “too young” for key jobs in the government, and even for ethnic community leaderships, urging them [youth] to patiently wait for their “time.” This unfortunate substitution of that once riveting SPLM/A’s ideological strategy of investment in youth with cheap but highly efficient Machiavellian tactics above is best illustrated by Dr. Dau Col Diing:

[Youth] have been obstructed as the “liberation-time payback mentality” amongst the now elders and the middle-aged within our society, who feel entitled to recoup what they themselves sacrificed as youth, has prevailed...There is also an element of elders’ survival (or “maintaining societal relevance”) in play which has resulted in misapplication of our ancestral social authority...Our elders and middle-aged appear to be intimidated and threatened by our modern youth’s capacity and capabilities which most of the elders and middle-aged can no longer compete with.

Again, whether or not this sense of inferiority complex among South Sudan’s elders—thus youth-phobia—has contributed to the ruling elite’s indifference and lack of political will to promote effective youth development agenda cannot be easily ascertained but is highly plausible.

## **7 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has argued that South Sudan’s youth are in a highly precarious situation and that given their numbers (72 percent of the population) as well as their creative energies and proven track-record spanning more than 50 years that ultimately ushered in South Sudan’s independence in 2011, genuine efforts aimed at promoting peace-building and sustainable development must target and prioritize the design and implementation of youth development

policy that is both coherent and integrated. As a way to achieve this goal, we outline the following strategic priority areas in which the Government of South Sudan and development partners must invest. These strategic priority areas are framed around three fundamental thematic clusters: a) medium and long-term strategy to promote descent employment opportunities for youth; b) tangible plans to awaken youth and foster a renewed sense of citizenship and ownership for the future; and c) establishment of an independent, professional body to craft, sell and coordinate youth development agenda at the national and local levels. These three priority areas are not meant to be prescriptive fixes but broad-based strategic roadmaps as detailed below:

**a) Medium and long-term strategy to promote descent employment opportunities for youth**

Studies by Guarcello et al (2011) and International Labor Organization (2012) demonstrate that lack of descent employment opportunities for South Sudan's youth is fundamentally a challenge. This challenge can, however, be addressed through the following measures:

- Genuine commitment to the establishment of Youth Enterprise Development Fund “with the goal to bring more youth into economic development” as stipulated in The Agreement to end the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS) (see section 7.1.4). This Youth Enterprise Development Fund would provide youth-led micro and medium-sized enterprises with access to important financial services as well as valuable training and mentorship to equip youth with requisite entrepreneurial attitudes and skillsets required for successful enterprise management. In this regard, Botswana and Kenya have fared better than most other countries on the continent and should serve as models for South Sudan.
- A concerted effort to support the realization of South Sudan's Vision 2040 Strategic Goal (2), Strategic Objective (1): “To ensure balanced, integrated, equitable and sustainable rural development by taking towns to the people and to avert the urban-biased development.” This concerted effort should be anchored on an increased but strategic funding for agricultural development in order to boost productivity and promote employment opportunities for the rural youth. Because South Sudan's population is primarily a “young one,” with 83% living in rural areas and 73% deriving livelihood from agriculture, it can be logically concluded that an integrated investment in rural and agricultural development is essentially an investment in the country's youth. As well, a study conducted in Liberia (World Bank 2009) resulted in findings that are congruent with the line of argument above, demonstrating that:

Modern agriculture has considerable potential for job and wealth creation and may absorb large numbers of would-be youth migrants or youths who currently crowd the cities with underemployment...[and] create jobs that will increase rural income and welfare and, thereby, retain young people.

This report goes further to underscore the negative impact of rural-urban youth migration, not only on urban-centers which are consequently crowded with unemployed populations but also on those rural areas out of which youth emigrate. In other words, rural-urban migration of the youth tends to compound problems by posing significant “challenge to rural development” because the process is highly “selective” in that “those who leave [rural areas] are generally younger, better educated, and more skilled...diminishing entrepreneurship and education level among the remaining population.”

- Promoting innovation and job creation through strategic funding and technical support for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and entrepreneurship programs at South Sudan’s key national universities. Professor John A. Akec, the current Vice Chancellor of the University of Juba, who has been keen on strengthening the STEM and entrepreneurship programs at this key national university, powerfully articulated (Personal Communications, September 1 2015):

Entrepreneurs are at the very heart of economic development and social change. Combining the available scientific knowledge and discoveries and other factors of production, they create new economic possibilities the pursuit of which results in better products or services; more efficient ways of making things or delivering services. Entrepreneurs, thus, have the power to turn goods ideas into profits for themselves and jobs for others, hence benefiting themselves and the rest of the society in which they live.

In fulfillment of the core idea articulated above, the University of Juba, under the leadership of Prof. Akec, has thus far established strategic partnerships with Arava International Center for Agricultural Training (AICAT) in Israel and Hawassa University in Ethiopia. At AICAT and Hawassa, outstanding graduates of the University of Juba receive advanced practical trainings and return to their home university to manage demonstration farms and engineering labs. Because it is economically unsustainable for the University of Juba and others to keep sending promising youth abroad for practical scientific trainings and capacity building, it would be much more cost-effective for the government and development partners to invest in and strengthen existing STEM facilities and entrepreneurship programs at key national universities.

- Renovating historical vocational training centers and expanding new vibrant programs across the country with the express goal of equipping out-of-school youth with the skills and attitudes they need to compete in a dynamic job market. These vocational training centers and programs should largely target youth in the rural areas where 55% of the population has been “classified as poor, compared to 24% in urban areas” (NBS 2012). As well, these vocational training centers should focus on imparting market-based technical skills that are subject to constant evaluation and current research, as opposed to

outdated traditional trades that continue to render youth unemployable in spite of all the long hours, days, months and years of training. For instance, a study conducted by Mercy Corps (2014) in Warap and Unity states found that vocational “students are taught traditional trades (including agriculture, carpentry, masonry, and bakery) [and] that these learning areas were chosen without a thorough market assessment” but simply on “familiarity with the subject matter and popularity, rather than on whether or not these specific skills are known to be useful.” More importantly, these vocational training programs should do more than just teach the students specified technical skills; they must institute plans to help their graduates transition smoothly into the job market (i.e., job fairs and related programs that ensure linkages to relevant industries, etc.)

**b) Tangible plans to awaken youth and foster a renewed sense of citizenship and ownership for the future**

The last 60 years of what is now the Republic of South Sudan have been rife with conflicts (external and internal) which have indisputably taken toll on the youth, one generation after another, engraving in the national psyche a number of social ills such as political violence, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, and lack of patriotism, among others.

So, now that South Sudan has finally achieved her ultimate goal of independence and nationhood, it is time to go back to the drawing board and chart a new path forward for the nation by awakening and sensitizing the country’s key demographic group, youth, and inculcate in them a new sense of citizenship and ownership for the future. This awakening and creation of new sense of citizenship and ownership for the future could best be achieved through the following mechanisms:

- Establishing a National Youth Service organization to provide teenage youth and those in early twenties with on-the-job skills trainings while imparting to them essential values such as hard work, discipline, volunteerism, duty and obligation, and good citizenship. This national organization would collaborate with service institutions such as South Sudan Red Cross, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Roads Authority, Military and Teaching Hospitals, and Electricity Commission among others. This national organization would then be held up to the highest standards possible so that successful graduates of its programs are esteemed and accorded respect and preference by employers, institutions of higher learning, and the South Sudanese society at large.
- Developing and promoting innovative programs aimed at helping South Sudanese youth create a sense of national identity, unity of purpose, and commitment to national service. An example of such innovative programs is a formation of South Sudan Youth Summit that would, on annual basis, identify a select group of outstanding young South Sudanese from all the 10 states, bring them together for an extended period of time, and train them in

leadership, conflict resolution and management, diversity, volunteerism, and service, among other important core values and skills. Such a program would create an invaluable forum for promising youth to go beyond their comfort zones, appreciate their ethnic diversities, and gain inspirations to become ambassadors for change and peace-building in their communities and the nation at large

- Passing a constitutional mandate requiring that the numbers of youth be proportionally reflected in both the civil service and the cabinet at all levels (national, state, and local). As emphasized throughout this paper, youth constitute South Sudan's largest demographic group that can no longer be ignored. This means that the government should review its current employment policies and practices, discard the old mentality that views youth as largely "inexperienced," and instead boost efforts to reach out to recruit experienced and qualified young people, both within the country and the Diaspora.

**c) Establishing an independent, professional body to craft, sell and coordinate youth development agenda nationally.**

Youth development is a dynamic, highly complex process requiring a multi-faceted approach and expertise. It is therefore prudent that there is established an independent (non-political)<sup>6</sup> professional organization to lead the nation on this important agenda of designing and implementing a coherent and integrated youth development policy. This independent professional organization would be tasked with the primary responsibilities of crafting and exuding a compelling national vision for the youth, conducting key research on matters affecting youth, monitoring and evaluating major youth development programs across the country, and promoting effective policy coordination at the local and national levels. More importantly, this proposed national organization would be led by experienced, visionary young South Sudanese professionals whose credentials would be vetted through a competitive transparent system and, once instated, technically supported at the board level by representatives of key stakeholders such as relevant government agencies and development partners.

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<sup>6</sup> There currently exists a number of organizations such as South Sudan National Youth Union and SPLM Youth League, etc., that are only politically oriented and lack the capacity to professionally and objectively address issues currently this country's youth. Because these organizations are nothing more than elitist organizations controlled by those with deep financial and political connections to the powers that be, they do not meet the objective criteria herein proposed.

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The Sudd Institute is an independent research organization that conducts and facilitates policy relevant research and training to inform public policy and practice, to create opportunities for discussion and debate, and to improve analytical capacity in South Sudan. The Sudd Institute's intention is to significantly improve the quality, impact, and accountability of local, national, and international policy- and decision-making in South Sudan in order to promote a more peaceful, just and prosperous society.

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