- What are your assessments of the approaches taken thus far by journalists and communication professionals in covering South Sudan
- What are ways we might adopt or integrate a peace journalism *approach* or *frame* in our updating / narration / reporting / coverage of R-ARCSS or of ongoing events in South Sudan in general?
- What prevents us from seeking a peace journalism approach to narrating / reporting events related to R-ARCSS?

STRATEGIC THINKING ON PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN

BREAKFAST DISCUSSION SERIES

REPORT ON SESSION FIFTEEN OF HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC THINKING ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN

THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS OF SOUTH SUDAN IN FRAMING POSITIVE PEACE MESSAGES FOR R-ARCSS IMPLEMENTATION

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SOUTH SUDAN

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I - THE FUNCTION AND ATTENDANCE

The Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) organized the fifteen session of **HIGH-LEVEL BREAKFAST DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC THINKING ON PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH SUDAN** at Pyramid Continental Hotel in Juba on Thursday, 28th November 2019. The function brought together 50 government officials, leaders of political parties, civil society leaders, political analysts, academic experts, journalists, NGOs leaders and diplomats who are engaged directly or indirectly in implementation of the **2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).** The participants arrived at the venue at prime morning time and took breakfast in the main Restaurant (07:35h – 08:30h a.m) before converging in the Conference Room (08:35h to 10:35 am).

II – OBJECTIVES AND DISCUSSION

Session Fifteen of High-level Breakfast Discussion was organized to enhance critical strategic thinking and sharp precision on the role of media and professional journalists of South Sudan in framing positive peace messages in the interest of R-ARCSS implementation. The deliberations were frank (Chatham House Rule Applied) with the expectation for following outputs by the key speaker and participants:

1). Acknowledging the positive role that has been played by media and professional journalists in framing positive peace messages to promote R-ARCSS.

2). Recommending effective tools for the media outlets and journalists to persuade parties to R-ARCSS to solemnly commit themselves to realization of real peace and stability.

3). Strengthening pressure capacity of media outlets and professional journalists to reflect and inform government, opposition, civil society, faith-based institutions, other stakeholders and international partners accordingly about the genuine aspirations of the people of South Sudan through R-ARCSS and peace dividends.

4). Providing alternative evidence-based public information for lobbying and advocacy in the interest of reforms and good governance in South Sudan through timely R-ARCSS dissemination and implementation at national and grassroots levels.

5). Developing networking strategies of cooperation on promotion of peace journalism by South Sudanese media outlets and their counterparts in the neighboring countries, in the region and at international arena.

The lead speaker was **Dr. Rebecca Lorins**, an American thinker and researcher with intimate experience on the Sudan and South Sudan. She holds Bachelor's Degree in Literature from Oberlin College (1992) and PhD in Comparative Literature from University of Texas at Austin in USA (2007) with Dissertation "Inheritance: Kinship and the Performance of Sudanese Identities". She worked as Fellow in Columbia University, Center for Oral History Research Summer Institute (2011) and also in Eastern Mennonite University, Summer Peace-building Institute (2013). She is currently the Dean of School of Journalism, Media and Communication Studies in the University of Juba. She served as Assistant Professor at the College of Arts and Humanities in the same university where she was the Head of Department of Mass Communication as well as Acting Head of Department of English Language and Literature (2014 – 2019). Also she is the Co-founder & Consultant in Likikiri Collective (2014 to the Present), co-developing and implementing projects in education, development and peace-building with South Sudanese NGOs that are working to address social and development issues using arts and humanities, cultural heritage and creativity. She facilitated a number of workshops on "Strengthening Media in Post-conflict Societies".

The moderator was **Mr. Atem Simon Mabior**, a South Sudanese holding Bachelor's Degree of Arts and Humanities (Honors) Degree in sociology from University of Khartoum, Sudan (2001) and also Post Graduate Diploma in 2007 from the same University. He participated in a number of international workshops and training on media professionalism. He worked in Upper Nile University as Teaching Assistant in Faculty of Community Development (Malakal, South Sudan in 2003 to 2011). Also he worked as Media Adviser of Kowto Cultural Center (Khartoum, Sudan in 2007 to 2010). He served as Media and Information Advisor in the Office of the National Minister of Petroleum of the Sudan (Khartoum, Sudan in 2010 to 2011). He contributed as columnist in a number of Sudanese daily newspapers from 2001 to 2011 in Khartoum. He was the Editor-In-Chief of Almasier Daily Arabic Newspaper from 2011 to 2012 and also as the Chairperson of its Board of Editors in 2012 to 2013 in Juba. He is currently the Senior Editorial Advisor of Almaugif and Columnist as well in Juba. He is a Board Member of Association of Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS).

Dr. Rebecca Lorins thanked the CSPS for organizing the important discussion and urged the participants to deliberate in good faith, framing their contribution on first person-basis. She put her ideas forward in PowerPoint using relevant examples and acknowledging how journalists have been operating under difficult situation in South Sudan. The evident of this is a recent personal experience she encountered in the main Campus of University of Juba. While she snapped with her camera phone a post on the wall of the Hall of Faculty of Medicine written "**Secularism Is The Epistemological Independence of Human Mind… C.I.S**", a bypassing young student came along to interrogate her for doing that without taking permission first. Though she considered that incident as minor yet it is a genuine case of how freedom of media is under repression in South Sudan even inside main academic campuses by the younger generation. Such kind of fear in the students and the citizens at large is borne out by the situation of war where "Peace Journalism" is still a dream to be achieved in South Sudan.

She urged the journalists and all media practitioners not to undermine the small incidences while they focus on big narratives of freedom of expression, which have so often been chained under pretext of preservation of national security of South Sudan. She urged them to use constructive media and positive messages to cover what is happening but also to be critical when there is lack of real progress in R-ARCSS implementation for sustainable peace in South Sudan. According to her there is no absolute impartial objectivity in journalism except that the reporters have to be conscious of who they speak to and the language of framing of the covered reality, especially when the messages involve subjugated advocacy on stories of violence in contrast with non-violence. What matters is how journalists utilize empathetically the available opportunities to shape the decisions taken by leaders and supported by the people. They should always remember that facts are selectively exposed and distorted at times as a matter of choice. Hence, the journalists should be more analytical and balanced in sharing their stories so as not to take for granted the issues of facts and values but tackle these in connection to historical legacies and relevance to present situation.

She cited Professor Johan Galtung to have initiated the discourse on "peace journalism" in 1970s. According to him, "Peace Journalism makes audible and visible subjugated aspects of reality". It uses conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of objectivity, balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting with critical but constructive attitude toward facts and texts. Journalists have to be careful with the facts as these are always selected and often distorted or repressed. That is why texts, including deeper texts in the sub consciousness or cultures of the parties (gender, class, national myths), have to be reported and balanced with counter-texts to expose any pretext of the context. Professor Galtung regarded peace journalism as ethical challenge for media profession.

McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) built on Galtung's discourse. They consider peace journalism as broader, fairer and more accurate way for framing stories. They underscored the proposition that the choices journalists make while covering conflicts tend to expand or contract the space available for society at large, imagining and working towards peaceful outcomes. Peace journalism approach provides a new road map that traces the connections between journalists, their sources of information, the stories they cover and the consequences of their reporting as far as media ethics is concerned. According to them, peace journalism is not advocacy but expansion of conflict transformation discourse to include visible peaceful outcomes from the processed perspectives.

According to Dr. Rebecca Lorins, war journalism is violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented. It focuses on conflict arena where two or more parties are involved with the goal of winning against the opponent. It considers zero-sum orientation for competition. It closes the space and limits the time by defining the causes according to who threw the first stone. It concentrates on secrets, making the situation looks opaque. It divides the people into "us vs them", looking at the other as problem and focusing on who prevails victoriously in war situation regardless of dehumanization involved. More so, war journalism is the worse of weapons used reactively and waiting for violence to erupt before reporting it. It focuses only on visible effects of violence (e.g., those killed or wounded, and material damage or looted). It exposes "their" untruths and covers up "our" lies. It magnifies "our" suffering, especially from viewpoint of able-bodied male elites who act as the mouth-piece for naming the other "evil-doer". It focuses on elite peace-makers in terms of victory through cease-fire, treaty, institution and control of society but with preparation for another war resulting from the flared up of the status quo.

Meanwhile peace journalism is harmony-oriented, truth-oriented, people-oriented and solution-oriented. It explores conflict formation (e.g, by X parties, Y goals, Z issues). It is based on win-win orientation and collaborative cooperation with opened free space and time. It analyzes the causes and identifies the outcomes, including their historical and cultural connections. It makes the conflicts transparent, giving voice to all parties to share their responsibility. It is empathetic in understanding but also in seeing war as a problem that should be resolved and shunned for good. It exposes untruths on all sides. It focuses on

conflict creativity with humanization of all sides. More so, peace journalism is the best of the weapons used proactively to prevent violence and report its possibility before it occurs. It exposes the invisible effects (trauma, glory and damage to structure/culture) and focuses on suffering of all, be they women, aged or children. It gives voice to the voiceless, naming all evil-doers as well as good-doers without fear or favor. It portray people as peace-makers but without undermining peace spoilers. It uncovers the covered-up issues, promoting peace through non-violence and constructive creativity with highlights of all the noble initiatives that deserve awards. It focus on structure, culture, interests and peaceful society that is capable of resolving conflict with adherence to reconciliatory reconstruction and development for the welfare of the people.

Dr. Rebeca Lorins contextualized the above-mentioned comparative theories and practices of media/ journalism profession by giving examples from some randomly selected newspapers coverage in Juba, noting how editors have a lot of power on framing news headlines in accordance with their respective editorial policy. She posed some questions to inform the discussion for a way forward to enhance the role that the media and professional journalists could play in South Sudan in a peace time. These included the assessments of approaches taken so far by journalists and communication professionals to cover and frame mass media messages, ways that might be adopted or integrated for peace journalism approach to inform the coverage, updates, narratives, and reporting on R-ARCSS and related events, and identifying the obstacles of peace journalism approach in South Sudan.

She considered R-ARCSS to be focusing much on promotion of interests of the elites than that of the wider public. Such gaps could be bridged by more discussions in public forums like the one organized by CSPS. Drama is also helpful in sending out visual and vocal messages of peace journalism in a simplified manner and for those who do not find comfort in print media. However, all these require sufficient funding, necessary logistics and involvement of well-trained journalists.
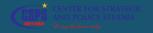
Mr. Atem Simon thanked Dr. Rebecca Lorins and participants for cordial and frank discussion**,** noting that journalists are facing a lot of challenges regarding professionalism and media ethics in South Sudan with denial to access information or be witnesses in the places where decisions are taken. He cited an example of how journalists were warned by the authorities not to conduct interviews or cover events that are connected to the Hybrid Court of South Sudan, otherwise they get criminalized and punished for defying the restrictions. Also he noted that the investigative journalism on corruption and reforms has become risky in South Sudan because of fear by those in decision-making positions regarding exposure of critical information to the public.

III– THE PILLARS OF ACTION AND WAY FORWARD

The following are the pillars of action that are gleaned from expert talk and deliberations by the participants on the topic of Session Fourteen of High-level Breakfast Discussion on The Role of Media and Professional Journalists of South Sudan in Framing Positive Peace Messages for R-ARCSS Implementation:

1). Access to information in places where decisions, employing good faith and applying code of ethics to frame accurate media messages.

2). Analytical understanding with balanced sharing of truthful stories supported by facts/values of historical legacies and connections to the present situation.

3). Unity in diversity of journalists with protective solidarity on peace journalisms, utilizing empathetically the opportunities for shaping public decisions and support.

4). Keenness with small incidences while focusing on big narratives out of freedom of expression with no restraints under pretext of preserving national security and stability.

5). Being ahead of issues with sufficient background on history, culture, geography, politics, and economics when covering news and conducting interviews.

6). Use of constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and other sustainable peace processes.

7). Reflection of language and idioms of journalism through wider literature reading for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge.

8). Sufficient funding and technical support for the media houses and journalists to operate independently and professionally when framing messages of peace.

The key speaker, moderator and participants deliberated objectively and frankly on the topic and recommend way forward for enhancing the role of media and professional journalists of South Sudan in promoting the information that contribute to restoration of comprehensive peace in the country. The following analytical policy action points were drawn from the High-Level Breakfast to help in charting new and effective outlook for South Sudan through full R-ARCSS implementation. Wider dissemination of these would help in forging better way forward for cementing peace and promoting development in South Sudan with guarantees of the welfare of all citizens.

S/N	LEADERSHIP	CITIZENS	STAKEHOLDERS	GUARANTORS	PARTNERS
1.	Regulate access to information and truth in accordance with code of ethics and use of reflective language and idioms of professional journalism.	Demand access to information and truth in accordance with code of ethics and use of reflective language and idioms of journalism.	Advocate for access to truthful information for journalists in accordance with code of ethics and use of professional language.	Urge for access to information and truth in accordance with code of ethics and use of reflective language and idioms of journalism.	Support access to information and truth in accordance with code of ethics and use of reflective language and idioms of journalism.
2.	Consolidate the work of media professionals with analytical understanding of unrestricted fact/values about the situation of South Sudan and the desired culture of peace in comparison to war journalism.	Support the work of media professionals with analytical understanding of unrestricted facts/values about South Sudan and the desired culture of peace in comparison to war journalism.	Enhance media professionalism with analytical understanding of unrestricted facts/values about situation of South Sudan and the desired culture of peace in comparison to unfair war journalism.	Share the good experiences of comparative journalisms with analytical understanding of unrestricted facts/values about South Sudan and the desired culture of peace over that of war.	Disseminate experiences of comparative journalisms with analytical understanding of unrestricted facts/values about South Sudan and the desired culture of peace over that of war.
3.	Encourage unity in diversity of journalists and media houses with solidarity to Empathetically shape public decisions and support peace in South Sudan and beyond.	Embrace unity in diversity of journalists and media houses with solidarity to Empathetically shape public decisions and support peace in South Sudan and beyond.	Support unity in diversity of journalists and media houses with solidarity for shaping public decisions and supporting peace in South Sudan and beyond.	Inspire unity in diversity of journalists and media houses with solidarity for shaping public decisions and supporting peace in South Sudan and beyond.	Enhance unity in diversity of journalists and media houses with solidarity for shaping public decisions and supporting peace in South Sudan and beyond.
4.	Direct journalists and media houses to be keen with small incidences while focusing on big narratives out of freedom of expression with no restraints under pretext of preserving national security and stability.	Urge journalists and media houses to be keen with small incidences while focusing on big narratives of free expression without restraints under pretext of preserving security and stability.	Support journalists and media houses to be keen with small incidences while focusing on big narratives of unrestrained freedom despite pretext of security.	Encourage journalists and media houses to be keen with small incidences while focusing on big narratives of unrestrained freedom despite pretext of security.	Assist journalists and media houses to be keen with small incidences while focusing on big narratives of unrestrained freedom despite pretext of security.

5.	Support constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and other sustainable peace processes.	Uphold constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and peace processes.	Defend constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and peace processes.	Ensure constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and peace processes.	Build networks of constructive media outreach with positive messages covering the events of R-ARCSS implementation and peace processes.
6.	Provide media professionals with wider literature for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge about South Sudan and beyond so as to be ahead of issues with sufficient background on historical and geographical connections.	Cooperate with media houses on widening the literature for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge about South Sudan and beyond so as to be ahead of issues and their historical or geographical connections.	Furnish media houses with sufficient literature for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge about South Sudan and beyond so as to be ahead of issues and their histories and geographies.	Support media houses with sufficient literature for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge about South Sudan and beyond so as to be ahead of issues and their histories and geographies.	Assist media houses with sufficient literature for continuous improvement of learning and mastering of knowledge about South Sudan and beyond so as to be ahead of issues and their histories and geographies.
7.	Ensure sufficient funding and technical support for the media houses and journalists so that they operate independently and professionally when framing messages of peace for news coverage and interviews.	Contribute to sufficient funding and technical support for the media houses and journalists so that they are able to frame messages of peace for news coverage and interviews independently.	Lobby to secure sufficient funding and technical support for the media houses and journalists to frame messages of peace for news coverage and interviews independently.	Offer sufficient funds and provide technical support for the media houses and journalists to frame messages of peace for news coverage and interviews independently.	Donate sufficient funds and provide technical support for the media houses and journalists to frame messages of peace for news coverage and interviews independently
8.	Strengthen the capacity of media outlets and with evidence-based framing and networking for promotion of peace journalism and welfare of the people of South Sudan and beyond.	Support media outlets to pursue evidence-based framing and networking with strong promotion of peace journalism and welfare of the people of South Sudan and beyond.	Back-up media outlets to pursue evidence-based framing and networking for peace journalism and welfare of the people of South Sudan and beyond.	Hold-up media outlets to pursue evidence-based framing and networking for peace journalism and welfare of the people of South Sudan and beyond.	Assist media outlets to pursue evidence-based framing and networking for peace journalism and welfare of the people of South Sudan and beyond.

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ABOUT THE CENTER

South Sudan Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) was established in July 2011 with aims of participating in the development of the country through applied research to enhance the debate on governance, nation and state-building in South Sudan, with the purpose of adding objectivity, critical thinking, nurturing strategic thinking, progressive and well-informed leadership.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This report was compiled by Dr. James Okuk, Project coordinator for the High-level Breakfast Discussion and Strategic Thinking on the Peace Process in South Sudan. He is renown academic and Senior Research Fellow at CSPS.

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