

Transitional Processes & Citizen Inclusion in Kenya and South Sudan: Local Perspectives on Sustainable Peace

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Oslo Center and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) have conducted a pilot project creating innovative bottom-up indicators of citizen inclusion and confidence (CIC) in transitional processes, which can inform national and international policymakers' understanding of citizen priorities around inclusion. Post-conflict transition periods offer a brief but critical opportunity to build the legitimacy of emerging democratic systems, and to establish a foundation for inclusive political processes and institutions. Despite an emerging consensus that citizen inclusion in transition processes are necessary to foster legitimacy and stable political systems, there are still significant gaps in opportunities for citizens to influence transition process design, implementation, or evaluation. Based on the research conducted and the CIC indicators developed, NDI, the Oslo Center and EISA present the following recommendations in the South Sudan context.

Policy recommendations – South Sudan

1. In the future, stakeholders should support democratic processes and institutions, which are deemed vital for citizens in South Sudan. This includes strengthening systems that enable credible elections and election management bodies, and building political parties that enhance inclusion, participation and accountability.
2. To increase and encourage political participation amongst citizens, measures are needed to protect citizens' rights, freedom of expression and association, in order to create a permissive environment for political engagement.
3. As a solution to addressing insecurity, a large military presence is not necessarily better. The size of the military warrants careful consideration, given that some locales in South Sudan express concern that a significantly military presence actually contributes to instability bearing negative psychological effect.
4. South Sudanese want peace. Interventions, such as sports, dramas, and traditional dance would be well-received by South Sudanese as they contribute to peaceful coexistence.
5. Stakeholders should leverage the potential role of religious institutions and the United Nations in future peace negotiations. They are considered among the most credible actors in peace talks. Admittedly, however, opinions of the UN are conflicted as some in South Sudan see the international organization as a vestige of colonialism and exploitation.
6. Whatever the future transition process looks like for South Sudan, efforts should include improving information dissemination and communication, as citizens need to know more about what is going on in South Sudan generally and in regard to more specific goings on, such as the peace process / National Dialogue / negotiations.
7. Men and women, alike, feel that women are excluded in South Sudan, in general and in political and peace processes. Against the backdrop of the widely held view that women would contribute to peace, it is worth substantively involving women as leaders in key decision-making processes both as representatives and negotiators at the table.