

Traditional Leaders Conference

26th - 28th March 2008,
Yambio, Western Equatoria state



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1. Background

Between March 26th and 28th 2007, traditional leaders of Western Equatoria state (WES) met at the Traditional Leaders Conference in Yambio, Western Equatoria. The conference was organised by Policy Advocacy & Strategic Studies (PASS) with support and funds of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland (FDFA) and United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

The conference's objective was to unite the traditional chiefs of Western Equatoria and to support them in forming the Traditional Leaders Council of Western Equatoria state. This council provides the traditional leaders with the opportunity to interact and to discuss matters of their concern. Likewise it aims at solving interethnic conflicts and at enhancing mutual respect by fostering exchange and cooperation between the leaders of different ethnic groups. In the long run, the council shall enhance the role of chiefs in community governance and support traditional values, languages and culture. This conference was the fourth one in a succession of conferences of traditional leaders. In Central Equatoria state, Lakes state and Eastern Equatoria state traditional leaders already formed councils. Further Traditional Leaders Councils are planned in the other six Southern Sudanese states.

1. 1. Context of the conference

In 2005 after decades of civil war the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which formally ended the war. The CPA aimed at ending hostilities and at paving the way for political reforms. Major elements of the CPA are principles of the transition process and on government structures as well as on ceasefire and security arrangements. The legal base of the state-building process in Southern Sudan is the CPA as well as the interim constitution of Southern Sudan (2005) in which form, function and competencies of state institutions are defined. According to these documents Southern Sudan is governed by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and is divided into 10 states with their own executive, legislative and judiciary institutions and constitutions. Administrative levels of the rural areas are county, payam and boma. In the course of the implementation of the CPA a state government, a state legislative assembly as well as judiciary structures were formed in Western Equatoria state. Western Equatoria state with its capital Yambio is composed of ten counties: Nagero, Tamabura, Ezo, Nzara, Yambio, Ibba, Maridi, Mundri West, Mundri and Manvoloties. At the county, payam and boma level both state administrators and traditional chiefs exist and are responsible for administration and governance. However, in practice the administration at the grassroots level is characterised by lack of funds to pay salaries or to provide infrastructure or services.

Table 1: Administrative levels in Southern Sudan

Government of Southern Sudan GoSS	
Southern Sudanese states	
Rural areas	Urban areas
County	City council
Payam	Municipality council
Boma	Town council

During the past violent conflict the Sudanese Government took advantage of the disunity among armed groups in the South and supported some militias for fighting against the SPLA and against ethnic groups from which the SPLA was recruiting. As a result, militias in the South started to fight each other in a violent civil war causing death, displacement and traumatization. Today ethnic tensions and divisions rooting in the past

violent conflict still exist between Southerners. The conference in Western Equatoria was initially planned to take place in November 2007. Due to insecurity and ethnic tensions it had to be postponed. The murder of three local policemen by Dinka SPLA soldiers raised old tensions between Western Equatorians on one side and IDPs and SPLA soldiers from other areas of the south of Sudan on the other side. Isolated crimes or conflicts between individuals easily take on an ethnic dimension causing ethnic tensions and insecurity in Southern Sudan. In the case of Yambio the tensions did not lead to further insecurity in November 2007. However, two years earlier in 2005 the conflict in Yambio had escalated. In bringing leaders of different ethnic groups together, the Traditional Leaders Council aims at reducing conflicts among the different ethnic groups and at facilitating cordial relationship and unity.

1. 2. Role of traditional leaders

During the era of Anglo-Egyptian rule a "Native Administration" based on indirect rule was installed in Southern Sudan. It was built on traditional socio-political structures which differed according to given local socio-cultural settings. Where no hereditary authorities were present such political institutions i.e. chieftainships were created (Johnson 2003¹). Beside the so called chiefs of the native administration a variety of different types of traditional leaders exist until today. Depending on the socio-cultural settings they are called rain makers, spear masters, elders and clan leaders. However, they have never been part of the native administration. The first war in Southern Sudan started in 1955, several months before Sudan became independent. Hence the south of Sudan has been affected by violent conflicts since independence. State structures and infrastructure have not been built or not maintained for decades. However, in areas where the Sudanese state was not physically present, no vacuum of authority appeared. Instead non-state actors such as militias and traditional authorities governed (Rolandsen 2006)². During the war the authority of traditional leaders diminished in some areas as they had no means to enforce their authority against armed groups.

In the 1990s the SPLM/A started to build up administrative structures in the areas they controlled. In 1994 the SPLM/A held the National Convention, an event planned as a party congress, which later got the significance of a constitutional assembly. At the National Convention the SPLM/A declared a new state with a five-layered government structure and elected John Garang leader of the New Sudan. These reforms aimed at setting up a civilian administration separated from the military with involvement of the population in decision-making processes on different levels. As the administrative institutions on the local level had remained unchanged since the colonial era due to neglect and conflict the SPLM/A relied on traditional chiefs for governance at the local level. The chiefs collected taxes, judged at local courts and provided recruits and labour. Some of the traditional chiefs were installed by the SPLM/A while others inherited their posts. Consequently traditional chiefs with different sources of legitimacy existed.

Nowadays chiefs are still crucial in many ways: They are engaged in jurisdiction, judging in local courts. Chiefs solve disputes between families and clans and are important for settling conflicts between ethnic groups. Chiefs cover administrative tasks such as collecting taxes, and they act as in-between the population and the government administration. The conducting of administrative undertakings such as the 5th Sudan housing and population census³ which took place end of April and beginning of May 2008 heavily depended on the support of chiefs. Chiefs directed the census mapping staff who took coordinates of settlements and services as well as villages and boundaries. Chiefs were also involved in the census awareness campaign informing their communities about the census process and its aims. In addition, Chiefs mobilized the communities to be counted and provided shelter and food to the census enumerators.

¹ Johnson, D. H. 2003. The root causes of Sudan's civil wars. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

² Rolandsen Å. 2005. Guerilla government: Political changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

³ Santschi M. 2008: Im Südsudan ist der Zensus ein hochpolitisches Unterfangen. Neue Zürcher Zeitung. 14. Mai 2008 Nr. 110

The Local Government Act which has not yet been approved by the legislative shall legally determine the competencies and activities of traditional leaders (Gurtong 2007). In addition the interim constitution of Southern Sudan refers to the Traditional Leaders Councils which are currently in the process of being formed. However, the legal foundation is not yet approved by the legislative.

2. The conference

2.1. Conference participants

62 chiefs of the three different local administrative levels (county, payam and boma) of Western Equatoria state participated in the conference. Chiefs of all ethnic groups living in Western Equatoria State attended the conference. The participants registered themselves as members of the following ethnic groups: Avukaya, Azande, Balanda, Baka, Bongo, Jur, Lori, Morokodo, Moro, Mundu, Nyamusa and Wira. In addition to the chiefs over 40 other invited participants and observers were present at the conference among, others other traditional authorities, representatives of youth and women's groups as well as observers of the church and the UN. Furthermore representatives of the Governor's office, of the state government, the county commissions and payam administrators participated. Three paramount chiefs Dut Malwal Arop from Lakes state, Magdalena Tito from Eastern Equatoria state and Dennis Paramolo from Central Equatoria state - chairing the councils already formed in their respective states – supported the traditional authorities of Western Equatoria in the formation of their Traditional Leaders' Council.

2. 2. Summary of Presentations and Discussions

This is a short summary of the presentations and discussions which took place in the course of the conference. More detailed information are available in an in-depth conference report written by Alfred Lokuji of PASS.

Plenary session

After a prayer paramount chief Wilson Hassan Peni, member of the organising committee thanked PASS and all persons involved for organising the conference. He underlined the conference's importance providing the chiefs with the opportunity to discuss their challenges. Paramount chief Wilson also referred to the CPA which according to him provides the chiefs with a key role as "voice of the people and supporter of unity". The commissioner of Yambio, Isaac Juma Martin highlighted the significance of chiefs during the war and the future positive implication of the conference organising the chiefs and supporting the communities.

Paramount chief Dut Malwal Arop from Lakes state, Chief Magdalena Tito from Eastern Equatoria state and paramount chief Denis Paramolo from Western Equatoria state greeted the plenum and underlined the importance of chiefs. Chief Magdalena told the state government representatives that the census could not be conducted without the support of chiefs: "If you are not in contact with the chiefs things like the census will not achieve. You send the message to the chiefs. We will beat the drum to inform the people." Chief Denis reminded the chiefs not to become political but to be the chief of everybody. In addition, Chief Denis pointed out: "People should not play with our land since it is our resource. Land has to be given to any kind of institution only by chiefs and the communities." After two representatives of the UNMIS and Kuno Schläfli from FDFA greeted the plenum Christina Jones-Pauly from the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) referred to the importance of chiefs' performance as judges in resolving disputes peacefully. She reminded the chiefs of the great value of their legal traditions and advised them to keep them.

Kwacakworo of the FDFA reminded the chiefs that without them there would be no *hakuma*. He described the chiefs as a fundament which has to be solid. The Minister for local governance Moses Timangi informed the chiefs that their salaries will be standardized according to their ranks. The vice-governor of Western Equatoria

Joseph Ngere Paciko asked the chiefs to inform the state government in case they observe movements of armed groups such as the LRA⁴ or the Ambororo⁵ causing insecurity.

Presentations of the ethnic groups

First Acuil Malith Banggol member of PASS and organiser of the conference revealed the aims of the conference and activities of the council. In addition he referred to the historical background of chiefs and to the legal background of the council in the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan. During Acuil Malith Banggol's speech an old chief complained that the chiefs are not informed or involved by *hakuma*. An observer of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) explained that chiefs have to address their complaints to their members of the state parliament and the parliament of Southern Sudan. A member of the local government board told the chiefs to respect the hierarchy when addressing complaints. Hence subchiefs have to inform paramount chiefs or payam administrators who then contact the commissioners.

Members of the different ethnic groups shortly presented their ethnic group in referring to the places where they live, their clans, their political organisation as well as socio-cultural peculiarities. In addition they specified their neighbours. Similar to Eastern Equatoria some persons included other ethnic groups as belonging to their "tribe". For instance a representative of the Jur explained that the Wira and the Nyamusa were Jur clans. A Wira attending the conference stated: "I know that there is a tribe called Wira. I am surprised that people say we are not a tribe. There are Nyamusa, Jur and a few Wira. Wira have 12 Clans who intermarry: Passi, Dari, Dari Kundu, Rumer, Mandier, Rumbegu, Tera and Letere etc." A further point of contention was the self-definition of the Jur and the Belanda. During the preparations of the conference a list of ethnic groups traditionally living in Western Equatoria was produced to ensure that the conference was inclusive thus that every ethnic group is represented. This list differentiated between the Belanda Boor and the Belanda Bviri. However, at the conference the representatives of the Belanda described all Belanda as one "tribe". They were presented as two entities belonging to one ethnic group. The Jur Beli called themselves not Jur Beli but Jur. As a matter of fact there seems to be a discrepancy between the categorization of the ethnic groups made by anthropologists in the past decades and the contemporary perceptions of the people themselves. At the end of the presentations Alfred Lokuji reminded the plenum to take care of economically marginalised ethnic groups such as the Bongo.

Chiefs, customary law and culture

In her presentation on customary law Christina Jones-Pauly referred to the unique situation of Southern Sudan where the customary law is stipulated in the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan as being the basis for the jurisdiction. She also explained that the diversity of customary law in Southern Sudan is caused by the fact that every ethnic group or clan has its own rules and norms rooted in their particular culture. She advised the chiefs not to be influenced by outsiders who do not know the laws and the socio-political and economic setting regarding justice but to decide by themselves and to formulate laws according to their perceptions and interests.

Kwacakworo advised the chiefs to keep in mind that they went to war for their culture as well as for respect and dignity for the whole of Southern Sudan. He reminded the chiefs of the importance of preserving their identity, their values and norms and to be proud of it. In addition, Kwacakworo told the chiefs to make sure that the council will not become another institution "doing nothing". He asked the chiefs to ensure that the council would serve the people. Kwacakworo stressed the importance of mutual respect and dialogue between the different ethnic groups in order to solve conflicts. Instead of demanding help from the government or NGOs the chiefs should try to organise themselves, Kwacakworo told them.

Setting up the principles and selecting the governing body of the council

Paramount chief Denis Paramolo, Chief Magdalena Tito and paramount chief Malwal Arop provided insights into their own experience as chairmen/chairlady of their respective councils. Chief Magdalena for instance told the chiefs that in Eastern Equatoria the council did not receive any support from the state administration and lacked resources. She advised the chiefs not to rely on the government but to start to help themselves and not to focus on salary but on their people. Chief Dut mentioned the priorities of the council in Lakes state trying to understand the root causes of the insecurity in the region. In addition, Chief Dut explained that in Lakes state the council first planned to collect money. However, collecting funds was legally not possible as no respective laws existed. Therefore the chiefs in Lakes state wait for the local government act to be passed to collect funds. The state government of Lakes state would not support the council financially yet but planned to do so in 2008, Chief Dut told the plenum. All three chairpersons gave the chiefs of Western Equatoria advices how to organise within the council.

The chiefs were informed that the council follows two principles: The principle of inclusivity ensures that every ethnic group is included in the council. Moreover the council follows the principle of consensus meaning that decisions are made on the basis of consensus and not on the basis of voting. After explanations regarding the principles the chiefs received a document with the principles of the Traditional Leaders Council in Central Equatoria state as basis for their discussions. The chiefs then met outside the conference hall to debate the document in working groups.

In the afternoon the chiefs presented the proposals for the principles of the council of the different working groups. Interestingly several of the working groups changed the term electing into selecting explaining that selecting would be the more appropriate term for their way of filling posts. Two groups demanded to include the principles that the government should provide the councils with transportation.

In a next step every ethnic group decided on a representative who represents them in the executive committee of the council. They also proposed candidates for the governing body of the council: a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer. Kwacakworo reminded the chiefs that the governing body should be inclusive meaning that not all three posts should go to the same ethnic group. In Eastern Equatoria for every post a number of candidates were proposed. However, in Western Equatoria it seemed that the chiefs already had decided on the representatives before. Paramount chief Wilson Hassan Peni who is already a leading figure among the chiefs working in his own office in the ministry of local government was selected for the chairmanship. Chief James Samuel Murangi was selected to be the council's treasurer and Chief Stephen Alipaya was selected as the secretary.

In the final session the Governor of Western Equatoria who was assigned Governor only few days before reminded the chiefs of their significance and responsibility towards the communities. The Governor told the chiefs to mobilize their communities to be counted in the census. Otherwise their boma or payam would not reach the numbers demanded to build an administrative unit. In that case their boma and payam would be aggregated to other entities and the chiefs would lose their chieftainship. After the closing ceremony of the conference the Friedrich Ebert foundation organised an election workshop for chiefs in order to sensitise them for the general elections planned in 2009.

Exchange between the state government of Western Equatoria and the chiefs' council

Representatives of the state government of Western Equatoria asked the organizers of the conference to prolong the meeting for one day to give the state government the opportunity to inform the chiefs as community representatives about a variety of issues. First, staff of the wildlife authority of Western Equatoria state tried to sensitise the chiefs to prevent poaching and to support the wildlife authority. However, even before the presentation started the chiefs took the opportunity to set their own agenda. They demanded the state representatives to clarify the chiefs' responsibilities. Furthermore, they complained that courts sometimes solve cases which they perceive as cases to be judged by chiefs. The chiefs also demanded the ministry responsible for distributing land to first consult the chiefs before allocating land. After the speeches

of the wildlife staff the chiefs had time for comments and questions. It was highly interesting to listen to the chiefs' critical remarks. The first chief stressed that often security staff such as soldiers, police or prison authorities are involved in poaching. The chief explained that it would be difficult for the chiefs to work together with security agencies to fight poaching as these agencies are at the same time involved in poaching. Chiefs became loud and started to talk but were stopped. Some chiefs walked out angrily.

The second presentation was done by the Ministry for agriculture which tried to sensitise chiefs on issues such as protection of the forest and reminded them to support the state government. Again the chiefs reacted reluctantly explaining they could not stop loggers with permits issued by the state government. Different chiefs stood up to talk and made the ministry responsible for over-logging as it would issue too many permits to get money. One chief explained that it should be the council of chiefs to issue the permits. His remark was supported by the other chiefs who applauded.

The minister of finance referred to the payment of chiefs and explained that the chiefs should register their names and would then be paid. The exchange between chiefs and state government assumed the shape of a discourse. The chiefs challenged the ministries when they felt that the state government asked for their support to solve problems caused by the state government itself. The chiefs used the meeting which was planned by the government as an event to inform chiefs as a platform to raise their concerns. The discussions also provided insight into the practical challenges of the administration on the local level which obviously heavily depends on the chiefs. The chiefs seemed to realize that they share many problems. They seemed to feel strengthened by the council as they referred to the council during the discussions with the representatives of the state government. Challenging the administration seemed to be easier as a member of a council than as an individual.

3. Analysis of the interview data

In the course of the Traditional Leaders Conference I interviewed 13 persons, aiming at talking to representatives of all ethnic groups present at the conference in Yambio. The objective of the interviews was to gain insight into the socio-political organisation and in the roles of the chiefs of the corresponding ethnic group. Further questions referred to the current political situation and to problems in a given region as well as the interviewees' vision of the future. Conducting interviews with representatives of different ethnic groups was challenging as the chiefs were always busy. During the breaks they either waited for food and tea or they were busy discussing the council or problems of their home areas. Thus they were most of the time sitting in groups debating. In one case a chief gave me three minutes to ask him questions: Then he told me to that he has to go back to his group. "I have to go. We have to work and to discuss the principles. This is very important for us." The chiefs' busyness illustrates to which extent they used the conference as opportunity to interact and discuss issues of their concern. Their motivation to discuss the principles without being interrupted by a researcher's interviews was one among several occasions showing the chief's motivation and determination to found this council. They seemed to perceive the council to be important for their cause.

Below are interpretations of the collected data (interview minutes in the Annex of the report). Talking to a few chiefs does not necessarily reflect a balanced view about the current dynamics and problems in a particular region. Some individual's views may be biased. In addition, the information provided by the chiefs (e.g. about cattle raiding by Dinka) could not be independently verified.

The majority of the interviewed persons were chiefs of different administrative levels, others attended the conference as observers. The majority of the interviewees were men reflecting the gender ratio of the conference' participants. Due to time constraints it was not possible to talk to representatives of all ethnic groups present at the conference because most of interviews were conducted during the breaks. In addition the exchange with some of the elder chiefs who did not speak English was limited as I did not always have a translator at my disposal.

Clans

First I asked the interviewees to list the clans of a given ethnic group. Just like in Eastern Equatoria some of the persons in Western Equatoria were not certain about the clans' classification and my questions provoked discussions. I am not sure whether this was due to misunderstandings about the term clan or whether the chief had difficulties to trace and agree on the clans. Often the interviewees gave the name of payams or boma in order to refer to clans. I had the impression that they confused clan (a socio-cultural entity) with payam or boma (an administrative category)⁶. Probably in some cases all members of a village belong to one clan. However, especially at the payam level different clans and even different ethnic groups may live in one payam. Other interviewees mentioned other ethnic groups as being clans of their own ethnic group. Due to the difficulties linked to the classification of clans, information about clans are lacking in some interviews and the collected data can not be used as scientifically valid data.

Socio-political organisation

In Western Equatoria the majority of the chiefs explained that chiefs are selected by their communities. In Eastern Equatoria the chiefs explained they were elected referring to voting. However, in Yambio and Torit asking the chiefs about their own case they most of the time inherited the chieftainship from their fathers. Their fathers either suggested them to be their successor or their extended families decided that they should follow their father. The communities later give the blessing for the new chief. Thus selection does not refer to a western system of election where potentially everybody could be elected but selection among family members of the former chief. During the conference chiefs explained that they will not elect but SELECT the representatives. They underlined the term select by writing it down in the constitution.

In interviews and during field research in other areas of Southern Sudan informants explained that communities observe children and adults to verify whether they have the qualifications to later become chiefs. Persons seen to be responsible, generous, helpful and known by the whole community are perceived as potential candidates for chieftainship. During my field research in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal qualities such as being able to talk and to negotiate on behalf of the communities were other capacities expected from chiefs. In addition, children of chiefs often spend time with their fathers and therefore become acquainted with the tasks of being chiefs at an early age. Some interviewees clarified that the system of traditional chiefs was established by the British in their areas.

As in Eastern Equatoria the informants in Western Equatoria referred to different terms when describing the chiefs of the different administrative levels. However, the terms used differed from Eastern Equatoria. The traditional chiefs on the county level are called paramount chiefs, the chiefs on the payam level payam chiefs and those on the boma level subchiefs. Headmen are responsible on the village level. Beside the traditional chiefs of the three administrative levels other traditional authorities such as clan leaders and rainmakers attended the conference. Further traditional authorities mentioned during the interviews were wizards and healers.

The participants in Western Equatoria never referred to age-group systems which are common in some ethnic groups in Eastern Equatoria consisting of associations of men or women who have the same age and status⁷. According to the interviewed the Azande - who are the biggest ethnic group in Western Equatoria - as well as the Morokodo follow the system of the royal lineage/clan. Other ethnic groups like the Acholi or the Shilluk also follow this system where chiefs or kings belong to a royal lineage and pass down their king or chieftainship to their offspring. Among the Azande all the interviewed paramount chiefs belonged to the royal

⁶ How can we interpret this vagueness regarding clans? Possibly administrative entities such as payam, boma are replacing clan as important reference framework for identity. However as likely as not administrative entities are used in particular political or administrative contexts such as the traditional leaders' conference. Clans as a socio-cultural and political entity may be important when it comes to marriage, rituals and in other socio-cultural contexts.

⁷ Members of a given age-group collectively execute economic, social and ritual activities. Hirschberg W. 1999. Wörterbuch der Völkerkunde. ImPRESSum Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Avungara clan. However, other ethnic groups such as the Jur don't apply the system of royal lineages/clans: The Jur and other ethnic groups have a less hierarchical leadership system based on inheritance where everybody can become chief according to interviewees.

Activities of traditional chiefs

During the conference several chiefs underlined that the tasks of chiefs are not yet legally defined but vary and are negotiated locally between the different actors. However, there are many similarities regarding the activities of the chiefs in Southern Sudan.

According to different interviewees the chiefs perform the following activities:

- Judging cases of theft, robbery, adultery, divorces and fighting between young people. Crimes such as murder are transferred to higher courts. Ensuring that victims receive compensation.
- Solving conflicts and disputes as well as facilitating reconciliation within families, within communities and between different ethnic groups.
- Guiding and advising the communities for instance by encouraging people to send their children to school or to increase cultivation.
- Mobilizing communities for instance in order to build health centres, schools or to support development projects.
- Chiefs on the county and payam levels head and organize the chiefs working on lower administrative levels.
- Collecting taxes: The collection of taxes is not unified. In some areas chiefs collect taxes, in other places they do not. In addition it is not determined which type of taxes they collect and which amounts.
- Acting as in-between the state administration and communities by dispersing information to the different levels of chiefs who inform the communities and by notifying the administration.
- Supporting and facilitating the implementation of the activities of *hakuma* together with administrators on the county, payam and boma level.
- Supervision of customs and traditions for instance by being involved in bride price negotiations and ceremonies.
- Welcoming visitors and "to tell the communities not to harass them."

In addition, rainmakers, clan elders and other traditional socio-political actors perform specific activities. Rainmakers are in charge of securing rain for cultivation. In Eastern Equatoria landlords distribute land. In Western Equatoria the headmen are said to be responsible for the land distribution. Some scientists are convinced that not chiefs but other traditional authorities were traditionally involved in the allocation of land. However, chiefs would try to get involved as the distribution of land is linked to resources and power. Chief Denis and Chief Dut for instance stressed several times that land has to be under the control of the chiefs and the communities. Clan leaders solve conflicts within clans.

The chiefs recorded in the council's principles that chiefs should not be involved in politics. However in the complex political and socio-cultural setting of Southern Sudan, in reality is difficult to draw a clear line between political and apolitical activities and between the interest of the communities and chiefs' own agenda. For instance during the census some chiefs tried to increase the population in their area in order to secure government funds and to secure their chieftainship. During my field research I met chairpersons of the Traditional Leaders Councils on different SPLM party occasions. When working with chiefs and before judging their activities, it is important to consider their hybrid nature being in-between the communities, the administration and also the SPLM while in some cases following at the same time their own interests.

Salaries

During the conference chiefs' salaries were debated several times. Two different reasons for receiving salaries were given by chiefs. Some chiefs perceived it as their right to get financial compensation for the work they have done during the war up to the present. Other chiefs complained about the hardship to make their own living. The way chiefs earn their living seems to vary. Some chiefs said that they would follow other income-generating activities such as farming or business, while others explained that such activities could interfere with their work as chiefs. Particularly paramount chiefs seem to be comparatively wealthy. In some cases chiefs seem to get support from their communities. The state government promised at the conference to pay chiefs a salary. The topic of the chiefs' salary is however contested by some of the organisers of the Traditional Leaders Councils conferences. They perceive it as a treat to the independence of the chiefs. For the chiefs - who according to interviews with chiefs and community members in different areas of Southern Sudan have a hybrid identity belonging to the sphere of *hakuma* but at the same time also to the community - salaries seem to be a priority. Several chiefs explained that during the war no ministries and state government structures existed but only the chiefs who had to support the SPLA by collecting youth as recruits and food for the soldiers.

During interviews and during field research community members and chiefs stated that communities can refuse successors recommended by the former chief's families or even dismiss chiefs. Reasons for dismissing or refusing a chief are the chief's lack of capacity to follow the communities interests, misuse of government funds, alcohol problems, violence against the community, being corrupt, judging biased as well as being involved in adultery.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

Several interviewees explained that **insecurity** is a major problem in Western Equatoria. In some areas the **Lord Resistance Army (LRA)** – an armed group founded in Uganda which is active in Uganda, Southern Sudan, DRC and the Central African Republic – spreads insecurity. The LRA is held responsible for ambushes, lootings, killings and kidnapping as well as displacing people in West Equatoria. The **Ambororo** pastoralistic nomads who are said to originate from Western Africa are as well accused of causing insecurity. Several chiefs and other participants of the conference blamed the Ambororo to scare Western Equatorians, to destroy fields and to demolish beehives. A further source of insecurity referred to by chiefs was the **SPLA** whose soldiers would harass the civilians. Chiefs living in areas neighbouring Lakes state referred to conflicts with Dinka. They accuse Dinka of stealing cows, of destroying their fields and of demolishing their fishing nets and beehives.

However, no chief referred to the tensions between Western Equatorians and the SPLA and IDPs originating from **Dinka** which caused clashes in 2005, 2006 and November 2007. In November 2007 when the conference could not take place due to the tensions in Western Equatoria the chief were not willing to invite representatives of IDPs. In addition, they refused to call the traditional authorities of the IDP's chiefs. Thus the council did not yet address the tensions between IDPs and the local population.

The majority of the interviewed persons stressed the **lack of services** provided in their home areas. **Health care** is described as being inadequate due to lack of personnel and drugs. Limited access to **water** is another challenge mentioned by chiefs who complained the lack of boreholes in their region. The **education system** does not work well due to the lack of teachers, they criticized. Limited **transportation and communication** are other challenges referred to by the chiefs. The lack of means of transportation hampers the work of the chiefs and the administration and would make it difficult to organise future meetings of chiefs, they underlined. The poor condition of the roads is perceived as of preventing the communities to sell agricultural products. One chief agreed to mobilize its community to construct schools and health centres if they get material support. Other chiefs did not mention limited access to services as a priority. Interestingly however, the translator working for a ministry told them to do so.

Another challenge of communities living in drier areas of Western Equatoria is their dependence on regular rainfalls. In dry years their harvest is inadequate and they suffer from **shortages of food**.

Vision of the future

All interviewees explained that they support the Traditional Leaders Council and that they seemed to be convinced that the council is an asset for the chiefs and will help to improve the situation of the communities in Western Equatoria. Several informants underlined that the Traditional Leaders Council will help the chiefs to exchange ideas and to cooperate in order to solve problems and conflicts. The council is also perceived as an institution which facilitates the work between chiefs and the administration.

4. Conclusions and comments

General impression

My general impression of the conference is positive. The atmosphere was encouraging and constructive. I experienced the chiefs as highly motivated, discussing the principles and their work as chiefs intensively. Furthermore, I perceived the atmosphere of the conference in Western Equatoria as more open and more relaxed than in Eastern Equatoria. Several times chiefs or other participants got up and started to sing and dance which I interpret as a sign of joy. In Eastern Equatoria the chiefs were more reluctant and observant and did exchange less⁸.

In my view the conference offered the chiefs a valuable and useful basis to exchange and to organise themselves. Since the chiefs met at the conference it might be easier for them to get in touch in order to solve conflicts or to find solutions for challenges. As such the council might prevent that future conflicts turn violent and may facilitate a peaceful solution.

Participants

Like in Eastern Equatoria the participants had variable backgrounds. In particular the higher-level chiefs seemed to have a higher education and more economic capital. During the workshops and discussions the participants actively participated and did not hesitate to touch conflictive topics, also in the exchange with government officials. I was impressed how actively youth and women representatives took part in the conference: Although they were excluded from the elections of the council executive and the chair, they actively participated in discussions and workshops.

Discrepancy between socio-cultural entities (ethnic groups, clans) and administrative categories (county, payam, boma)

As in Eastern Equatoria several interviewees had difficulties to list the clans of their ethnic group or did not differentiate between socio-cultural entities such as clans and administrative categories such as payam. However, in reality socio-political entities such as clan and ethnic groups are not necessarily congruent with administrative categories. Thus communities governed by traditional leaders are not essentially ethnically homogeneous. In particular in urban centres and in regions with IDPs, communities are ethnically heterogeneous. Inviting representatives of IDPs in order to support dialogue between local population and IDPs could be considered for a future conference. This might help to ease the tensions between Western Equatorians and Dinka IDPs but at the same time such a meeting could be conflictive.

Ethnicity is dynamic and applied contextually

As this initiative aims at creating a council representing all ethnic groups it is of importance to know all ethnic groups living in a specific state in order to secure the ethnic inclusiveness of the councils. However, it soon became clear during the conference that different participants had divergent ideas on ethnic belonging and the boundaries of ethnic groups. In several cases ethnic groups described as "tribes" by anthropologists were locally perceived by conference participants as a clan belonging to an ethnic group. However, definitions of ethnic groups are not absolute and fix, ethnicity is dynamic over time and is applied contextually. Likewise

⁸ In Eastern Equatoria violent conflicts and cattle raids deteriorated the relationship between the communities.

boundaries of ethnic groups' classifications are constantly negotiated. Thus labels have to be applied and used with great care and only as an analytical category. It is important to be aware that discussing ethnicity and the boundaries of ethnic groups in the context of the conference - in order to clarify whether all ethnic groups are represented or not – is sensitive and conflictive as it may lead to disagreements. Furthermore there should be space for Southerners to define themselves who they are and how they want to define their ethnicity.

Personal commitment and professionalism of the team organising the conference

During the conference I was impressed by the professionalism and personal commitment of the team organising the conference as well as the sensitiveness regarding conflictive issues. The mediator and the experts exuded their dedication to support the traditional leaders and thus fostered an atmosphere of confidence. I perceive the organisers commitment to invite representatives of women, youth, international actors as well as of the government as very meaningful. The chiefs are not an isolated group but act within the socio-cultural setting of Southern Sudan; therefore the presence of other actors group is important. Furthermore I support Acuil Malith Banggol's as well as Alfred Lokuji's engagement to link up with other international actors working with traditional leaders. Involving them provides the council with more weight and may help to better coordinate the activities of international actors with chiefs.

Material and symbolic resources

During the conference several chiefs demanded proper uniforms or other means of identification. Interestingly, during the conference the Azande paramount chiefs all wore the same kaki trousers and shirts. In Western Equatoria the paramount chiefs organised the uniforms on their own. Chief Magdalena the chairlady of Eastern Equatoria wore a scarf showing that she is the chairlady of the council. This underlined the importance of material and symbolic resources as markers for authority in the Southern Sudanese context. This might be an important aspect to be included in the conceptions of further conferences.

Follow up

Bringing the chiefs together in the conference is a crucial step as it allows them to found the council as well as to meet and to exchange. However, to ensure that the council will become a sustainable institution able to work and to face challenges such as lack of communication and transportation, the council needs further support. Therefore a follow up and further discussions with chiefs about what kind of support they need and where and how they can get this support on a long term basis would be important. A Follow up might provide insight into the councils activities and also allow to understand the how the communities perceive the council.

Appendix

Interviews with conference participants of different ethnic groups

Avukaya

Interviewee 1

According to an Avukaya payam chief the Avukaya live in Mambe, Tore, Bangole and in Amaki. The Avukaya have their own language.

Avukaya clans

The Avukaya have the following clans: the Apriba, Modu, Bido, Iya, Alubiri and Toluga. However, the Avukaya do not have the system of royal clans as the Azande do.

Avukaya neighbours

The neighbours of the Avukaya are the Madi, the Moro and the Ajugu.

Political Organisation

According to the payam chief the Avukaya chiefs are often the offspring of men who became chiefs during the colonial time. Once a chief grows old the family of the chief meets to select a successor among themselves. The community later gives its blessing. The interviewed payam chief was young and worked as businessman when he was selected to become chief. However, he never intended to be a chief. He was convinced that his elder brother would follow his father but the family selected him. Since he is chief he stopped to work as a businessman because as a businessman he would have to give loans to community members: "I can not be involved with the community with loans as a chief." He distributed his capital to his brothers who now do business on his behalf. The chiefs survive due to the support of the community he explained. According to the payam chief chiefs are respected persons who get contributions from their communities so that they do not need to farm themselves. The prisoners dig for chiefs and the communities provide free food.

Role of chiefs

The chiefs are responsible for the supervision of customs and take care of the communities, the payam chief said. As a chief he works with *hakuma* and is in touch with the administrators on the county, payam and boma level. He mobilizes and advises the community for instance by encouraging people to send their children to school. In addition chiefs judge cases of adultery, theft and fighting between young people and solve conflicts. Chiefs also divorce marriages. According to the payam chief men can demand a divorce by writing a letter. However, women have to go to the prison three times before they are allowed to get divorced. A further task of the chiefs is to tell the communities to welcome visitors. As a payam chief he visits boma chiefs to supervise their work in courts. He does not collect taxes as there is at the moment no law which allows the chiefs the collection of taxes. According to him chiefs are only allowed to collect fees in the courts. The court treasures divide these fees. Part of the fees go to the chief and the other court personal, an other part goes to the local council and the rest is used "to keep the office" and to invite visitors.

Vision of the future

The payam chief is convinced that the Traditional Leaders Council is very important for the chiefs in Western Equatoria. He pointed out that the council provides the chiefs with the opportunity to meet and to debate their challenges and discuss ways forward. In addition he is sure that the council will facilitate the exchange and work between chiefs and the government. According to the payam chief the council will allow the chiefs to respond to problems quickly and to get access to information and education. In addition the council will prevent tribalism and conflicts linked to ethnicity, the chief explained. The payam chief came up with some suggestions: He supported the idea of the chairman of the council who asked for soldiers working for the

chiefs providing them with security. A further concern of the chief was the lack of identification for chiefs. He explained: "When people come together other can minimise a chief. They can for instance call you: 'Friend, bring me something'. However a Sultan should be respected." The payam chief was convinced that a uniform or other means of identification would prevent the humiliation of chiefs.

Azande

Interviewee 2

According to an Azande payam chief the Azande speak Azande and live in the counties Tambura, Ezo, Yambio, Nzara, Ibba and Maridi as well as in the DRC and the Central African Republic.

Azande clans

The payam chief explained that the Azande have many clans including Kurangbo, Kaviuga, Wuundud, Giti, Gbambi, Batiko and Wgbapio. The Azande have a royal clan called Avungara which is ruling the Azande. Hence all paramount chiefs belong to this clan. However, subchiefs (boma level) belong to any clan. The Azande were a kingdom but they have no king anymore.

Boundaries/border

"We have nothing like a border or a boundary. People live mixed together. Across the river are other tribes. Sometimes the river gives the border."

Interviewee 3

Political Organisation

An Azande paramount chief explained that in Western Equatoria paramount chiefs are responsible for the county level, payam chiefs for the payam level and subchiefs for the boma level. The payam and subchiefs would in some cases inherit their position, in other cases they are elected. The interviewed paramount chief belongs to the royal clan of the Azande, the Avungara clan. His father was paramount chief. He was selected after the death of his father to be the successor. According to the paramount chief all paramount chiefs belong to the royal clan of the Azande. He explained that members of the Avungara clan live in every county of Western Equatoria, therefore in every county a local paramount chief belonging to the royal clan would govern the communities. The "lower level" chiefs would belong to any clan or ethnic group; he explained. The paramount chief clarified that beside chiefs other traditional authorities such as rainmakers or wizards as well as headmen exist. Headmen are assigned to govern villages and are responsible for the distribution of land. Thus three to four headmen work in one boma under one subchief.

Role of chiefs

According to the paramount chief chiefs are involved in security issues. As paramount chief he collaborates with the citizens and at the same time with higher authorities (officials). The government informs him and he disperses the information to the different levels of chiefs who inform the communities. Chiefs work as in-between the state administration and communities, for instance when IDPs return to their home villages. Chiefs judge cases. Crimes beyond the chiefs' duties such as murder go to the magistrates. In addition, chiefs collect taxes.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

The paramount chief complained about inadequate provision of services to his community. In his area health centres lack personnel and drugs. As a consequence his community has not access to sufficient health services. Due to lack of teachers the education system is not functioning well. In some areas access to water is

a problem as women have to walk long distances to fetch water. Transportation and communication are other challenges. No public buses reach his area and no motorbike is available to him. The paramount chief complained that the commissioner has no car. Therefore it would be difficult to organise meetings of chiefs in the future.

The Lord Resistance Army (LRA) is disturbing his area "all the time", the paramount chief explained. The LRA is active in several areas in Western Equatoria and would kill, loot and kidnap even near the state capital Yambio. "Sometimes the LRA just loot. Sometimes they kill." Beside the LRA, SPLA soldiers would also harass and kill people, the paramount chief complained.

Interviewee 4

The second Azande paramount chief interviewed inherited the chieftainship also from his father. The time his father became old and weak "he called the public to let them come to select someone who is capable", the paramount chief explained. "I was nominated by my father. From that day the community of my village decided that I can hold this position." The paramount chief was 15 years old and still in school when he became chief. At the beginning he was supported by his father and other elders. He pointed out that even though he was still young he was capable to act as a chief due to the fact that he was born in a royal clan. "We are ready to be chiefs even as young men. It is in our blood." As a child he often spent time with his father and joined him in the court and at meetings. Consequently, he learned to know the work of a chief early. His father prepared him to become chief. The paramount chief belongs to the royal clan of the Azande which exists in every village. Most of the chiefs in Western Equatoria belong to this clan, he underlined.

Role of chiefs

As a paramount chief he is involved in a variety of activities. He judges cases and he has to solve problems of his communities. As paramount chief he also mobilizes the communities in order to build health centres or schools or to support development projects. In addition, he supports the government in all its activities. Beside their chieftainship most chiefs have no other work. In the old days the chiefs received contribution such as food from their communities and survived on these donations the chief explained. For instance the first harvest and a part of the quarry were given to the chiefs. However, nowadays many chiefs would have to follow other ways of income-generation such as business the paramount chief said, contradicting himself.

In the old days chiefs had more power, the paramount chief explained. All chiefs had special soldiers and chiefs were paid by the British Government. During the wartime the system changed and remained unchanged until now. Nowadays chiefs do not have soldiers. As a consequence most chiefs do not have power, the paramount chief complained.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

The paramount chief referred to two major security threats the LRA and the Ambororo. According to him the LRA disturbs the communities in Western Equatoria by looting, abducting children and killing people. The LRA displaced people in Western Equatoria state and left them without food. He describes the Ambororo as Arabic nomads who travel with their cattle in great numbers. The Ambororo stay in the forest and the bush. He accused them of destroying beehives and chasing people they meet in the forest.

Vision of the future

The paramount chief explained that the Traditional Leaders Council is very important as "it will unite Western Equatoria and South Sudan". The council provides the chiefs with the opportunity to discuss issues that affect their communities, the paramount chief pointed out.

Baka

Interviewee 5

According to a Baka paramount chief the Baka live in Maridi county as well as in DRC.

Baka clans

The paramount chief referred to the following Baka clans: Ngbuvu, Mbule Muyu, Mbule Movo and the Mbule Rungu. According to him the Baka do not have a system of royal clans such as the Azande do.

Political organisation

Beside chiefs the Baka have rainmakers, witches and healers the paramount chief pointed out. Chiefs are selected from the families of former chiefs. "After the death of the chief the family tries to select somebody. Sometimes a chief recommends a successor." The paramount chief explained that most of the time the communities accept the recommendations made by the chiefs' families unless the person recommended misbehaves: Regarding different types of misbehaving the chief referred to unnecessarily asking for money, to misuse of government funds, to drinking, to beating up people, to accepting bribes, to judging biased as well as to adultery.

Belanda Bor/Belanda Bviri

6. Discussion with Belanda about the Belanda as an ethnic group

The Traditional Leaders Council aims at being inclusive. As a consequence one of the preparation steps of the conferences is to produce a document listing all ethnic groups traditionally living in the respective state to ensure that all ethnic groups are represented at the conference. The list of ethnic groups of Western Equatoria differentiated between the Belanda Bor and the Belanda Bviri. However, during the conference they represented themselves as Belanda and did not make the differentiation between Belanda Bor and Belanda Bvirir. During a break Kwacakworo spoke to several Belanda to find out why they do not apply the categorisation constructed by anthropologists. The persons asked explained that there are two different languages used by the Bviri and Bvoro but that they are nevertheless one ethnic group the Belanda. The Belanda Bor speak a language similar to Acholi or Jur. After long discussions the Belanda referred to history and explained that the Bvoro/Bor before lived with the Jur and had a "bad behaviour". They resided with the Jur who had goats. However, the Bor followed the same way of subsistence farming like the Belanda Bviri who had no goats. Then the Belanda Bor joined the Belanda Bviri and now live together under one chief.

Jur Beli

Interviewee 7

The interviewed Jur Beli payam chief did not call his ethnic group Jur Beli as mentioned on the list but just Jur who live in Mbolo county. He explained that the Jur Beli are a different group and live in Rumbek. He calls his own ethnic group Jur or Jur Modo.

Political organisation/Role of chiefs

The Jur live in Mvolo county in seven payam who are divided according to clans. He pointed out that the Jur do not have a hierarchical inherited leadership system such as the Azande. After a chief's death the Jur

identify a person with leadership qualities. Chieftainship is therefore not inherited among the Jur according to him. "Everybody can get leadership", he explained. In the old days the Jur had rainmakers but today they would not be active anymore. Chiefs judge cases and ensure that victims get compensation. In case of problems such as hunger chiefs would try to find out the causes and advise the communities to solve the problem.

Morokodo

Interviewee 8

According to a Morokodo payam chief the Morokodo live in Mundri and Maridi county. The Morokodo speak their own language which has some similarities with the language of the Wira, the Moro, the Nyamusa and the Avukaya who are neighbouring tribes.

Political organisation

The payam chief became chief through elections he explained. His father was chief followed by his brother. However, when his brother died everybody agreed that he should become the chief the payam chief pointed out. According to him the Morokodo have a royal clan called Kenyi.

Role of chiefs

The payam chief explained that chiefs have many tasks to fulfil. Chiefs have to know the challenges of their communities and have to solve their problems. They have to settle conflicts and to prevent insecurity. Furthermore chiefs act as in-between the administration and the communities for instance by informing the communities about development projects or informing the government about problems in the villages.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

The payam chiefs saw need for development project in his area. He complained about the lack of schools and health centres. He stated that he would organise his community to build schools and health centres if they would get financial and material support.

Mundu

Interviewee 9

According to the interviewed Mundu paramount chief the Mundu live in Maridi East county.

Mundu clans

The Mundu are composed of three clans: the Mundu, the Baka and Avukaya.

Political organisation

Since the 1930's (thus since the colonial time) the Mundu have chiefs who inherit their chieftainship. His grandfathers were chiefs and he inherited the position of a paramount chief in the 4th generation. He replaced his father after his death during the war under the SPLA.

Culture

In terms of cultural specialities the paramount chief referred to funeral songs and to the tradition that Mundu remove their hairs as a sign of mourning. In addition neighbours would come to support the family of the deceased. In turn the family of the deceased has to feed the neighbours.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

The paramount chief described the current situation as fair enough: "I have nothing to complain" he said. His community still suffer from the war. However, the chiefs try to cooperate among themselves and to improve the situation.

Livelihood

The Mundu are agriculturalists growing among other things durah, beans, maize and groundnuts.

Vision of the future

The paramount chief welcomed the formation of the council as a way of bringing the chiefs together and as a way of facilitating their cooperation.

Nyamusa

Interviewee 10

The interviewed Nyamusa payam chief explained that the Nyamusa live in the following areas: Mundri, Dari, Lesi, Amadi and Lakanadi. The Nyamusa neighbours are the Dinka, the Mundari and the Thali. The area of the Nyamusa is fertile according to the payam chief.

Nyamusa clans

The chief explained that the Nyamusa have no clans but different family lines. The Nyamusa marry also Mundari and Nyangbara.

Political organisation

The payam chief's father was chief and inherited the chieftainship from his father when he died. The interviewed payam chief became chief in 1978: "I was a soldier in 1978 in Wau. My father died and left only young brothers. Before my father died he called me to come and to work. He was there all the time to work without benefit." According to the payam chief the citizens appreciated his father and therefore accepted him to follow his father.

Role of chiefs

Chief work in the court and judge cases such as adultery and fighting the payam chief stated. However, chiefs do not judge murder cases which are heard by the judiciary. In wedding ceremonies chiefs sometimes participate and address the guests. In addition chiefs assist families in family disputes and try to mediate in conflicts. Chiefs are also involved in intertribal conflicts: "In any conflict between the Dinka and Nyamusa we can call the Dinka to solve the cases and not to go to war."

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

Referring to the conflict with the Dinka the chief explained that the Dinka steal cows. However, the Nyamusa buy cattle. "We find our own ways to get cows not by stealing." The chief described the relationship between the Nyamusa and the Dinka as problematic. He accused the Dinka of destroying Nyamusa's beehives, of stealing their cows, of destroying their fields and of demolishing their fishing nets. Another challenge of the Nyamusa is their dry area the chief stated. The Nyamusa heavily depend on rain. In dry years with only limited rainfall their harvest is inadequate the chief complained. In such cases they have to buy sorghum. Beside this the situation of the Nyamusa is not problematic, explained the chief. The translator then asked the chief about the situation of schools and health centres. Interestingly the chief did not mention lack of education and health services but the translator had to tell him to do so implicitly. Then the chief referred to some areas women have to walk 18 miles to fetch water and to the lack of boreholes.

Vision of the future

The payam chief is very happy about the council as it provides the chiefs with the opportunity to debate their problems. The chief is also content that visitors attending the council are interested in the situation of his home area. "I am your father in terms of age. But you are my mother."

Wira

Interviewee 11

The Wira live according to the interviewed Wira paramount chief in Mundri West County. The Wira have their own dialect but understand the Mundu and the Morokodo. The Wira share a paramount chief with the Morokodo and the Nyamusa.

Political organisation

According to the paramount chief chiefs are elected. Referring to his own case he explained that his grandfather and his father were chiefs. After his father's death he became chief. "The community came and selected me. We were two persons my cousin and me. They voted for me." The paramount chief interpreted his selection with his personal qualities. "I have a good background. I supported everybody digging in the fields and I know the whole community." According to him the communities already observe young boys to judge whether they own the capacity to become chiefs. The paramount chief was convinced that the community perceived him as a good person. However, he first rejected the position as he was still young, in school and had a job. "I rejected it as it is a difficult task. I was playing life. I was young and wanted to live." After three months he agreed to become chief as he had the blessing of the community.

Role of chiefs

As a chief he tries to mobilize the citizens to cultivate. He also solves conflicts and advises the communities and other chiefs to cooperate.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

According to the paramount chief the Wira are under pressure by Dinka from Rumbek who enter their area with cattle. "Our people tell them to go away as their cows destroy our fields." According to the paramount chief the chiefs are not happy with *hakuma* as they never get any financial support: "You can not work 22 years and never receive your rights. That is why we want to know our rights and where we get money." In addition, he wished to get good clothes and shoes for his work as a paramount chief.

Vision of the future

The paramount chief fully supports the council as he learned about agriculture and how to rely on oneself during the conference he said.

Interviewee 12

The interviewed administrator explained that the Wira are an ethnic group speaking their own language. He explains that the Wira neighbour the Nyamusa. As a consequence one payam chief is from Wira and another payam chief Nyamusa.

Role of chiefs

According to the administrator chiefs fulfil different activities at the same time. They judge and settle conflicts and collect taxes. Chiefs also bring development programmes to the communities and make sure that

unnecessary movements do not take place. Furthermore chiefs participate in fishing and hunting activities. Chiefs are also involved in the bride price negotiation and in ceremonies such as weddings.

Current political situation, challenges in the state/county/payam

The Wira administrator explained that his community has limited access to water due to lack of boreholes. Moreover, the Wira produce plenty of food but can not sell it due to bad roads. Further problems are lack of means of communication and inadequate health centres. In some areas the communities suffer from insecurity caused by cattle raiding and clashes over grazing land he stated.

Interviewee 13

The Wira SPLM women's representative is like her colleagues from Wira convinced that the Wira are not a clan but an own ethnic group. She highlighted that the Wira have their own language which is broadcasted on South Sudan Radio. There are the Bete, Morokodo, Wira, Nyamusa, Modo, Molo, Lori, Deli and Sopi. These were all clans but the major ones became tribes. What is the difference between a tribe and a clan? A tribe is bigger", the SPLM women's representative explained. She also mentioned that the Wira marry each other. However, within clans marriage is forbidden.