



Despite imperfection of our background, The Joy of hope and peace brings us together



## **SOUTH SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (SSCC) ACTION PLAN FOR PEACE (APP) VISION 2023.**

South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) notes that “the CHURCH by its very nature is a Peacemaker, it is who we are, not just a project that we do. Peace is more than just the absence of war, and we commit ourselves to this as a long-term process, even lasting for decades. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.’ (Matthew 5:9).”

It is out of this identity as peacemakers that the Church created the Action Plan for Peace (APP), in 2015. The Action Plan for Peace (APP) is the home-grown and Church-led strategy of the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), comprehensively addressing the root causes and long-term effects of conflict through Advocacy, Neutral Forums, Healing and Reconciliation. The Action Plan for Peace (APP) envisions “A peaceful, prosperous, and reconciled South Sudan built on inclusive citizen engagement at all levels” and it signifies an approach to ending violence in South Sudan by building on the decades of church experience in peace building and reconciliation.

Going forward, the goal of the Action Plan for Peace (APP) is clear and succinct: a peaceful and just South Sudan where citizens co-exist, live in harmony and experience equitable development within a secure environment. The CHURCH is uniquely positioned to help make this happen, with their ability to convene Neutral forum (free space) even between warring parties, and reach vast numbers of South Sudanese through their regional and local structures in the process of the Community Conversations. The next step is to continue strengthening the Church structures, in particular the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) Regional Offices, to empower the Inter-Church Committees (ICC) and Peace Facilitators, all the way down to the grassroots level. These groups can reach crucial components of society for example cattle camp youth, community leadership and specifically women who come on Sundays to pray - and support them to become champions for peace and agents of trauma healing and resilience in their communities. The grassroots Church structures will also be able to more fully integrate trauma awareness and healing into church activities. In addition, it will be important to follow-up on the outcomes of the Community Conversations, maintaining the communities’ trust that their input was heard and their suggestions enacted, as a key step to consolidating the gains of the Action Plan for Peace (APP) previous work.

Perhaps the most unique - and critically important - role of the Church to promote peace in South Sudan is its ability to promote Healing and Reconciliation, hold Neutral Forum and advocate for the voiceless in South Sudanese society. The Church alone can accompany political and military leaders to communities where they have committed wrongs, where they can admit their misdeeds, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. There is a long history in South Sudan of using healing and reconciliation tools to build relationships where past actions have damaged social cohesion, and of communal apologies, public forgiveness, and reconciliation, often led or supported by the Church. Acknowledging the past and apologizing for the suffering of victims, is a step towards healing, even for those who have committed or suffered terrible atrocities. It enables those who have been wronged look towards the future rather than dwell in the past; to decide against revenge and anger. It is a crucial step towards building peace. A next step for the Action Plan for Peace (APP) will be to focus on the Healing and Reconciliation Pillar - especially building coalitions for interstate reconciliation. It will also be for the Church to create Neutral Forum (free space) at Regional and Community Conversations at the local levels, to attain healing and reconciliation amongst grassroots communities. Finally, there are opportunities to work with other National Councils of Churches in the Region, especially in Kenya and Uganda, to develop a Regional approach for the South Sudanese Diaspora and be a voice for peace on behalf of those communities.

It is commonly said that peace is a process. Nowhere is this truer than in South Sudan. If the effort is abandoned now, the world risks a repetition of the dissolution of peace that occurred after the signing of the CPA in 2005, where peace dissolved when leaders and communities who had not fully healed and reconciled were left without support to do so. Support to the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) must be continued; as the Church is the institution most trusted by communities and parties to the conflict alike, they are a crucial partner for peace in South Sudan. With continued, strong support for the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) Action Plan for Peace (APP), “in the year 2023, we can move freely through the streets of JUBA, WAU, MALAKAL, BENTIU, BOR, TORIT, YEI, YAMBIO, TOMBURA, MARIDI, KAJOKEJI and other towns and villages of South Sudan, and the guns will by then surely all be silent.”





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