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# Peacebuilding through 'Sport for Development and Peace' in South Sudan

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## Peacebuilding through ‘Sport for Development and Peace’ in South Sudan

Mitsuaki Furukawa\*

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### Abstract

In South Sudan, two conflicts have erupted since independence in 2011 and ethnic tensions are rising, increasing the importance of "Peace and Social Cohesion" in the country. The National Unity Day (NUD), a national sports competition, has been held annually since 2016 in an effort to support peacebuilding through sports. In this paper, we examine qualitatively and quantitatively the effects of NUD by constructing panel data before and after NUD6, which was held in 2022, with its selected athletes as the treatment group and the non-selected athletes as the control group, and by using testimonies collected from interviews with the athletes. Specifically, we construct "trust" as a proxy variable for social capital and the primary variable in the quantitative analysis, and test whether mistrust causes conflict within the same community, with other ethnic groups, and with the central government. The results revealed that building trust through NUD6 mitigates the perception of conflict toward other ethnic groups. To contextualize these results, we conduct an analysis using qualitative data. The testimonies define the meaning of "peace" and "coexistence" for the athletes and confirm the role of sport in mitigating conflict. One of the new findings is that there are many cases in South Sudan where sport has contributed to conflict mitigation in this way. We were also able to confirm that during NUD6 there were many opportunities for the athletes to interact with other ethnic groups, and that having meals and playing games together was not only an opportunity for interaction, but also a chance for the athletes to become friends with other ethnic groups to foster trust among them. The results show that NUD6 provided exactly the kind of environment that the athletes desired, a place for peaceful coexistence. Based on these findings, it is intended that this paper will contribute both academically and practically as one of the accumulated examples of "sport for development and peace".

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**Keywords :** Social Cohesion, Social Capital, Sport for Development and Peace, South Sudan, Peacebuilding, Adaptive Peacebuilding

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## 1. Introduction

In 2011, South Sudan became the youngest UN member state. After years of conflict, independence had been achieved, and eventually a referendum resulted in an overwhelming majority of more than 98% of the population deciding to secede from Sudan. However, the optimism and euphoria of independence did not last long. Political disagreements between factions within the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) led to a resurgence of violence, and civil war broke out in December 2013. In August 2015, amid pressure from the international community, a Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed by the government and opposition parties. However, this agreement broke down in 2016 when the signatories clashed violently. Then, for the second time since independence, conflict broke out again in July 2016. Subsequently, in September 2018, another agreement, the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), was signed to pave the way for the establishment of a transitional national unity government in 2020. However, a structured truth and reconciliation process to stabilize the peace has still not materialized. Furthermore, the prolonged conflict and the violence that has accompanied it has deepened ethnic tensions and distrust among the South Sudanese, which is a concern for nation-building.

In this situation one of the unique and effective activities for national reconciliation in South Sudan has been the attempt to promote interaction and social cohesion through sports. South Sudan has a long history of sporting events (e.g., wrestling) that attracts participants from all parts of the country. However, these events are usually limited in scope (e.g., regional sporting events and the Jonglei Terekeka wrestling tournament). In this context, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MoCYS)<sup>1</sup>, with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), organized South Sudan's first national sports event in 2016. The circumstances that led to the organization of the event began in December 2014, when the author was the Chief Representative of JICA South Sudan and had the opportunity to meet with the Director General of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MoCYS), who strongly urged the revival of the national sports event, as South Sudan today needs unity beyond state and tribal boundaries.

Subsequently, JICA decided to support the MoCYS in organizing a national sporting event, taking into account the state of trust among the ethnic groups in South Sudan. The event brought together in Juba, the capital 350 youth athletes representing regions across the country. Football and track and field competitions were held during the nine-day event. The government named the event the National Unity Day (NUD), and it became an annual event to promote peace through sports. From March 19 to 27, 2022, NUD6 was held in Juba, bringing together youth under 20 years old to play football (men), volleyball (women), and track and field (men and women). The

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of the reorganization of ministries and agencies, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports became the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

participants were selected to represent all 10 states in the country under the theme of "Peace and Unity."

Furukawa's (2022, 2023) analysis of the effects of NUD, using cross-sectional data from a survey of athletes who participated in 2021 and testimonials from interviews conducted during that event, showed that participating athletes strengthened their social capital through interactions during the event, building unity among the athletes. However, since these studies were limited to data on NUD5 participants collected during that event and did not compare participants (the treatment group) with non-participants (the control group), this paper reports on the data and testimonials from the treatment and control groups before and after NUD6 and the quantitative analysis that used panel data and testimony-based analysis. Specifically, we construct trust as a proxy variable for social capital as the primary variable in the quantitative analysis and examine whether mistrust causes conflict within the same community, with other ethnic groups, and with the central government. By doing so, we can verify whether the athletes' perceptions of conflict can be mitigated through the strengthening of social capital such as trust, which is necessary for the NUD's theme of peace and social cohesion. We then use qualitative data to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis.

This paper is organized in eight sections: Section 1 introduces the study; Section 2 describes the background and process that led to the holding of the National Unity Day in South Sudan and the content of the NUD; Section 3 provides a literature review on peacebuilding assistance, sports for development and peace, and social capital; Section 4 presents the research methodology used in the study; and Section 5 presents an overview of the sample and trends in the data. Section 6 describes the quantitative analysis and its estimation results, while Section 7 presents the results of the analysis using qualitative data to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis. We then present our conclusions in Section 8.

## **2. South Sudan and National Unity Day**

South Sudan has a population of about 12 million in 64 ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> The main ethnic groups are the Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk. After gaining independence in 2011, the first conflict erupted in December 2013, about two and a half years after independence. After this conflict a peace agreement was reached and a transitional government established, but conflict broke out again in July 2016. Before independence, the country fought to gain autonomy by uniting against Sudan as a common enemy. The post-independence conflict, on the other hand, began in Juba with a struggle for the position of president and spread rapidly across the country (Edward 2016; Modi and Smith 2019). Koul (2020) notes that the level of trust and respect between different ethnic groups in South Sudan has declined significantly since the recurrence of post-independence

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<sup>2</sup> ["South Sudan" \*The World Factbook\* \(2023 ed.\). \*Central Intelligence Agency\*.](#)

conflict in the country. The root causes that have evolved into deadly ethnic conflicts are ethnic hostility and competition, which have been fuelled for political exploitation purposes, and political competition (Nyadera 2018). In particular, youth have been politically manipulated for the sake of conflict (Koul 2020).

In South Sudan, a patron-client relationship exists from the upper to the lower levels of society. Politicians and generals are patrons and defenders of their ethnic groups, but these same politicians and generals also demonstrate the legitimacy of their power to the community by getting ethnic group youth to collaborate and carry out acts of violence against their opponents (Hutchinson and Pendle 2015; Edward 2016; Pendle 2017; Koul 2020). While post-independence conflicts have strengthened ties within the same tribe, they have also weakened ties with other ethnic groups and increased ethnic tensions, which is a major challenge for nation-building (Koul 2020).

In the face of the above challenges, the peacebuilding process in South Sudan is based on liberal peacebuilding theory, which aims to establish a transitional government based on an agreement between the international community and the government of South Sudan, the assignment of Ministers through power sharing, the integration of the military, the integration of the police, and the implementation of elections after the establishment of an interim government (Furukawa and Deng 2022). On the other hand, major aid donors, disappointed with governments that repeatedly engage in conflict, have developed international development assistance processes that bypass governments based on the Donor-Principal Agreement model.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as will be discussed below, a focus on the voluntary initiatives of local communities, which critics of liberal peacebuilding theory have argued for, has not been fully implemented in South Sudan. Therefore, as stated in the South Sudan National Development Strategy (2018), rebuilding trust between the government, the people, and development partners is critical to nation-building, there is a need to strengthen social cohesion, particularly in the form of social capital such as trust, which is the basis for this.

In this context, for the first time since independence, a NUD was held in January 2016 under the theme "Peace and Unity." In designing this event, it was decided to apply a bottom-up approach to the programmes and rules reflecting the voices of each region, in order to emphasize the local initiatives that "adaptive peacebuilding theory," as discussed in the next section, seeks to achieve. Specifically, a regional meeting in Juba with representatives from across the nation was held to discuss the rules and criteria for selecting athletes, and preparations for the details of the event were carried out once a consensus was reached among the parties concerned on the

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<sup>3</sup> Western nations embarked on the "Donor Principles for Engagement, Priorities, and Working Requirements. Under this new policy for support to the country, it was agreed as a matter of principle that assistance would not be carried out through the South Sudanese government. Funds that had been allocated for development assistance to the country would be diverted to humanitarian aid that did not rely on government involvement.

activities, athlete selection methods, rules, responsibilities, and the roles of respective regions and MOCYs and JICA (Furukawa 2023) in the event. As a result, the event was designed to take nine days and bring together about 350 under-20 year old football (men) and track and field (men and women) participants who would represent all regions of the country, and who had agreed on the objectives of the event. During the event, in addition to sports competitions, there were Peace Games and lectures on themes such as "Peace Building through Sports," "Fairness and Compliance with Rules," "Reconciliation and Dialogue," and others.

Since then, the NUD has been held annually in Juba, based on the concept and management of the first NUD. From the third NUD, volleyball (women) was added so that each state could choose one sport, either track and field or volleyball for women's participation, in consideration of gender balance. In addition, wrestling was added as a sport only for NUD5 in 2020 (Furukawa 2022). Accommodation was provided by the Multipurpose Training Center (MTC) in Juba. Rooms for the athletes were assigned without regard to ethnicity to facilitate interaction. Each room was shared by more than 20 athletes, meals were provided at the MTC, and buses were used to transport the athletes to and from their respective competition venues. Athletes were encouraged to spend time together outside of competition whenever possible (JICA, MOCYs, interviews).

### **3. Trends in Peacebuilding Assistance**

Since the end of the Cold War, the pattern of conflict has changed markedly from conflicts between states to civil wars between domestic groups. Conflicts over political power, economic interests, and differences in people's identity regarding ethnicity, religion, and language that spur violence have increased (Jenson 2010). As a response to these states, conflict resolution mechanisms based on 'liberal peacebuilding theory', which argues that state preferences rather than state capabilities are the main determinant of state behaviour, by promoting international cooperation, developing international law and institutions, deepening economic interdependence, spreading democracy and seeking stability in the international system itself, as if to counter realism, which emphasises state power (= i.e., military power), have come to attract attention. (de Coning et. al. 2023).

However, faced with the increasing recurrence of conflict in countries that are supposed to have ended it, there has been a call for a rethinking of the situation. As a cause of recurrent conflicts, for example, Paris (2004) attributes the failure of peace operations in the 1990s to poor democratization and the transition to a market economy. In addition, Paris and Sisk (2009) argue that while the exogenous nature that "liberal peacebuilding theory" aims for is essential, this creates a dilemma that inhibits local actors. Critics of "liberal peacebuilding theory" have therefore proposed a "post-liberal peacebuilding theory," calling for a transformation from the traditional top-down, exogenous "liberal peacebuilding theory" to a bottom-up, endogenous

liberal peacebuilding theory (Taniguchi 2020). Nevertheless, in many conflict-affected countries, people are marginalized, societies are fragmented, and humanitarian crises such as chronic malnutrition, extreme poverty, and land grabbing are common because of conflict, and the risk of conflict recurrence cannot be avoided.

Therefore, the debate has now evolved around the "local turn" approach that places more emphasis on the ground in conflict-affected countries (Mac Ginty 2013). This approach has resulted from two trends: (1) the development of hybrid peacebuilding theory, which aims for a "hybrid peace between liberalism and local society," and (2) of "resilience theory," which expects society's resilience to be the key to peace. Cedric de Coning (2020) further developed the idea of "resilience theory" into the "adaptive peacebuilding approach." The Adaptive Peacebuilding Approach is a complexity-sensitive methodology in which peacebuilding actors, including local communities and people affected by conflict, are actively engaged in the structural processes of maintaining peace, using an iterative process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation (de Coning 2020), and is important as an approach that drives the practice of intervention in the international community. However, these trends, while emphasizing local agency in peacebuilding, do not address its endogenous nature and remain in a state of trial and error.

In this context, the role of sport for development and peace (SDP) came to the forefront of attention. Under these circumstances, the "Sport for Development and Peace" initiative, which aims for local ownership and endogenous nature, is also required in peacebuilding. The MDGs, adopted by the United Nations in September 2000, were the catalyst for the activation of international social development through sport, and in 2003 the UN commissioned and approved a major report entitled "Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals." The purpose of this report was to promote better integration of sport into the development goals as a useful tool for development and peace (Kidd 2008). In this vein, support from the UN, SDP-related agencies and partners such as the International Sports Federations and other organizations have been accelerating their programs to support SDP, partly due to the rapid increase in support and organizations and the volunteerism of young people (Kidd 2008; Giulianotti 2019). Sport-based interventions have been developed as social interventions that use sport to achieve non-sport objectives (Theeboom et al. 2010). Its main support programs have focused on strengthening basic education, public health, community safety and social cohesion, and supporting girls, women, youth, HIV / AIDS patients, and persons with disabilities in developing countries, and have been carried over into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Furukawa 2022).

SDP however has both positive and negative aspects. Regarding the positive aspects, sport for example provides opportunities for social, interactional, and cooperative behavior, contributing to cultural learning, trust, and the establishment of networks (Haudenhuyse et al. 2012), and if applied in the right way, positive experiences can dominate, and multiple inclusive social identity creation achieved (Schulenkorf 2010). Participation in sport can thus help the



process of belonging, trust, and inclusion, and when properly managed, it is also useful for social enlightenment (Skinner et al. 2019). Sport thus has a positive influence on individual change and development and can subsequently have broader social impacts (Lyras and Welty 2011, 312), and furthermore, it is generally believed that sport has a positive integrative function. Through a common interest in sport, different, sometimes divided, communities can be revitalized (Meir and Fletcher 2017). However, while these positive outcomes have been shown, it has also been noted that sport can exclude individuals and groups and further divide communities, and that sport cannot independently solve the ills of society (Meir and Fletcher 2017).

With these positive and negative effects demonstrated, SDP support in the Global South has increased in the 21st century, and the number of examples of "sport for development" is on the rise. On the other hand, examples of "sport for peace" have been limited in the field of peacebuilding (Furukawa 2023). So how can sports play a role in rebuilding societies that have been fragmented by conflict, and assist in stable nation-building as in South Sudan? To build the resilient social contract needed for post-conflict state building, McCandless (2018) notes that three drivers are needed. These are: (1) "inclusive political settlement of core conflict issues;" (2) "increasing effective, equitable, and inclusive organizations;" and (3) "expanding and deepening social cohesion." On these drivers, as indicated above, the international community has developed exogenous and top-down support for peacebuilding based on "liberal peacebuilding theory," which in turn is based on market economy and democratization. This is what is referred to in (1) and (2) above. However, for the "local turn (3)," "expansion and deepening of social cohesion" is required. In particular, social cohesion is a key issue for peacebuilding, as the first victim of domestic conflicts is the cohesion of trust and solidarity (Brown et al. 2015).

Until now, however, the post-conflict peace agreement process has marginalized local communities, including civilians, in both the negotiation process and the post-agreement implementation process as external actors. When the international community and government and rebel elites sit down to negotiate the peace agreement their interests have become the focus of discussion (Donais 2012). Aid has thus been developed based on the exogenous and top-down "liberal peacebuilding theory" described above. The development assistance deployed in this context has been centered on support for priority areas such as socioeconomic infrastructure development, agriculture, education, health, and water supply for national reconstruction, but for the "local turn" approach, assistance that emphasizes the autonomy of local society and broadly involves the people is required (de Coning et. al. 2023).

In particular, as in South Sudan, where interaction between conflicting ethnic groups and communities is limited amidst a divided society (Furukawa 2023), it is important to bring the population at large together and increase opportunities for interaction in order to promote social cohesion. However, in the midst of ongoing conflicts and tensions between governments, rebel groups and different ethnic groups, it is essential to introduce support that is as depoliticized and

neutral as possible to make this possible. Of course, while it is not possible to completely eliminate political color from any area of support, with neutral external intervention and appropriate design sports can be relatively de-politicized and rally more of the population in a natural way. From this perspective, sport is expected to serve as a support tool in conflict-affected countries for a "local turn" approach. In addition, the conflict structures created by civil wars undermine trust and solidarity among peoples and ethnic groups and contribute to social divisions (Brown and Zahar 2015), so it is important to build bridges between conflicting ethnic groups and communities and restore cohesion (Colletta and Cullen 2000; Fearon et al 2009). In particular, the role of social capital, such as trust, is important as a basis for enhancing social cohesion.

Coleman, Bourdieu, and Putnam's discussion of social capital is representative. In this, Putnam's (1993) concept of social capital, which defines it as the characteristics of social organizations that can improve the efficiency of society, such as trust, is highly applicable in situations such as South Sudan, where trust among ethnic groups is declining and its restoration is an important theme in nation building (Furukawa 2022). Turning now to Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000), we see that he emphasizes the need for mutuality in social connections to enhance the efficiency of society. He also typified social capital as "bonding" in terms of "inward networks" that strengthen exclusive, often homogeneous, groups with strong ties and relationships to each other, and "bridging" social capital characterized by "outward networks" that encompass "people across diverse social cleavages" (Putnam 2000). He then argued that increased social connectedness promotes greater social solidarity and social cohesion through "bonding" and "bridging" individuals to the larger collective whole (Putnam 2000). In addition, Woolcock (1998) referred to vertical relationships, such as those with government, as "linking" social capital. These categories of social capital are a useful framework for analyzing the situation in South Sudan, where social ties between ethnic groups, trust between ethnic groups, and trust between people and government are lacking (Furukawa 2023).

On the other hand, there is limited empirical research analyzing the strategic potential of sports projects to contribute to conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in deeply divided societies (Schulenkorf and Sugden 2011). For example, Cardenas (2016), recognizing the complex and myriad issues that shape and define the struggles in Colombia and Northern Ireland, used sport to promote peacebuilding through the lens of actors involved in the design, support, and implementation of sport-based peace interventions in both areas. Collison et.al (2016) explores the expansion of cross-border partnerships through soccer in Rwanda's history of genocide and painstakingly describes the complexities of engaging with local populations through "sport for social development" programs in post-genocide Rwanda. Meanwhile, Giulianotti et.al (2017) examine how sport influences and is influenced by broader political processes, including examining key political aspects of sport in Kosovo in terms of development, struggles over recognition, and social conflict and division.

In addition, representative project examples of that limited empirical research include the Football for Peace (F4P) project for Jewish, Arab, and Circassian communities in northern Israel (Schulenkorf and Sugden 2011), the island of Cyprus in a situation of social fragmentation saw the "Doves Olympic Movement" (Kartakoullis et al. 2016), which attempted to build trust between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot children using sport and related activities on the socially divided island of Cyprus; and the "Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace," which is a peace project in Sierra Leone using grassroots soccer (Woodhouse 2019); "the Open Fun Football Schools project" in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Gasser and Levinsen 2004); and the "National Unity Day" in South Sudan (Furukawa 2022, 2023), the subject of this paper. In each of these cases, the goal is to rebuild a society divided by conflict through sports.

A study on the National Unity Day in South Sudan, based on semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and KII data conducted with athletes participating in NUD5 during the event, examined whether the social capital of the athletes was strengthened, and this effects was demonstrated (Furukawa 2022, 2023). However, this study only analyzed cross-sectional data on athletes participating in the event, and was unable to examine the effects of NUD interventions using panel data. Therefore, since the theme of NUD6 is "Peace and Social Cohesion," we decided to propose a research question to see if the athletes' perceptions of conflict and changes in ethnic and national identity would occur through NUD to help in achieving peace. Then, we formulated a hypothesis: The perception of conflict against other ethnic groups will be mitigated as trust is fostered through NUD6 interactions. To examine this hypothesis we construct panel data for the NUD6 selected and non-selected athletes in the 2022 NUD target regions before and after NUD6. Selected athletes were placed in the treatment group and non-selected athletes in the control group, and we conducted multiple regression analysis using the difference in difference method. We then conduct a qualitative analysis using athletes' testimonies in order to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

To examine the above hypothesis we conducted quantitative and qualitative surveys to capture the views on the study's objectives and research questions of NUD6 participants and non-participants in all 10 states of South Sudan. The quantitative study included a panel questionnaire administered to the same participants and non-participants before and after NUD6 in 2022. Athlete treatment status consisted of selected athletes (SA) who participated in NUD6 (the treatment group) and non-selected athletes (NSA) who did not participate in NUD6 (the control group). The quantitative survey was complemented by qualitative methods including focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with athletes (both participants and non-participants).

The author was unable to participate in the surveys in South Sudan due to visiting constraints outside of Juba, but designed the panel questionnaire and interviews and set the questions. Based on this, a contract was awarded to a local consultant through JICA. The data collection team consisted of one supervisor and six enumerators in each of the ten states. Prior to data collection in the field, a one-day pilot of the panel questionnaire was conducted on February 25, 2022; pre-NUD6 data collection was conducted between March 5 and March 18, 2022; and post-NUD6 data collection was conducted between May 9 and May 21, 2022. Data collection was conducted in the center of the capital cities of the 10 states to simplify travel whenever possible. All FGDs and KIIs were voice recorded. Informed consent was obtained from all study participants after explaining the purpose of the study. Prior to the study, the Ethics Committee of the author's university (Ref. No. 2021, 2-53) formally approved the study.

The survey targeted 80 athletes (40 treated and 40 controls) in each of the states, for a total of 800 interviews. Athletes to be interviewed were identified based on a list provided by MoCYS in each state. Athletes in the treatment group were those selected to represent their states in the NUD6 based on criteria established by the MoCYS and JICA. The control group athletes, on the other hand, consisted of eligible athletes who were not selected. Additional criteria for athletes in the control group were that they had not participated in previous events, including NUD6, since the intervention effects of NUDs were to be tested. Selection was made by committees in each state.

After receiving a list of athletes from the MoCYS in each state, we sought to mobilize all athletes before and during data collection with the help of coaches, assistant coaches, state-level ministry officials, and team captains. Athletes were asked to gather at central, easily accessible locations such as community halls, parks, and soccer fields in each state capital to better facilitate data collection. The initial goal was to collect panel data from a total of 800 individuals, but only 499 questionnaires were collected in the pre-NUD6 data collection and 408 in the post-NUD6 data collection. The reasons for the difficulty in re-contacting the same athletes included the resumption of face-to-face schooling throughout the 10 states in early May (face-to-face schooling was temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March), and the fact that many athletes had moved away from their respective state capitals, meant a general difficulty in scheduling athlete teams to arrive in central locations for interviews.

Another factor that may have contributed to the low participation rate was the fact that no refreshment incentives were provided for data collection prior to NUD6.<sup>4</sup> The data source, which consisted of 408 participants, was found to include cases in which athletes who were not initially selected for the event decided to participate just prior to the event. Furthermore, in order to measure the effect of the NUD intervention according to the research objectives of this paper, we

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<sup>4</sup> In order to encourage athletes to participate in the survey during data collection after NUD6, a snack equivalent to 800 SSP was provided to athletes who cooperated in the survey.

excluded those respondents who had participated in a NUD before, and restricted the control group to athletes who had never participated in a NUD and the treatment group to athletes who were participating in a NUD for the first time, resulting in 109 respondents being excluded from observation, bringing the total panel observations for the analysis to 299. The panel data consisted of 112 treatment group and 187 control group participants for a total of 299 respondents.

On the other hand, for the FGDs and KIIs, in order to represent a variety of views the FGDs had four groups: male SAs, female SAs, male NSAs, and female NSAs; and the KIIs had four sport team captains, male NSAs, female NSAs, members of faith-based organizations, and members of female group organizations. The goal was to conduct 13 interviews per state (4 FGDs and 9 KIIs) for a total of 130. Respondents were randomly selected based on whether they planned to participate or had already participated in NUD6. However, due to the many challenges faced during data collection, a total of 82 surveys for qualitative analysis were collected during pre-NUD6 data collection and 58 during the post-NUD6 data collection period.

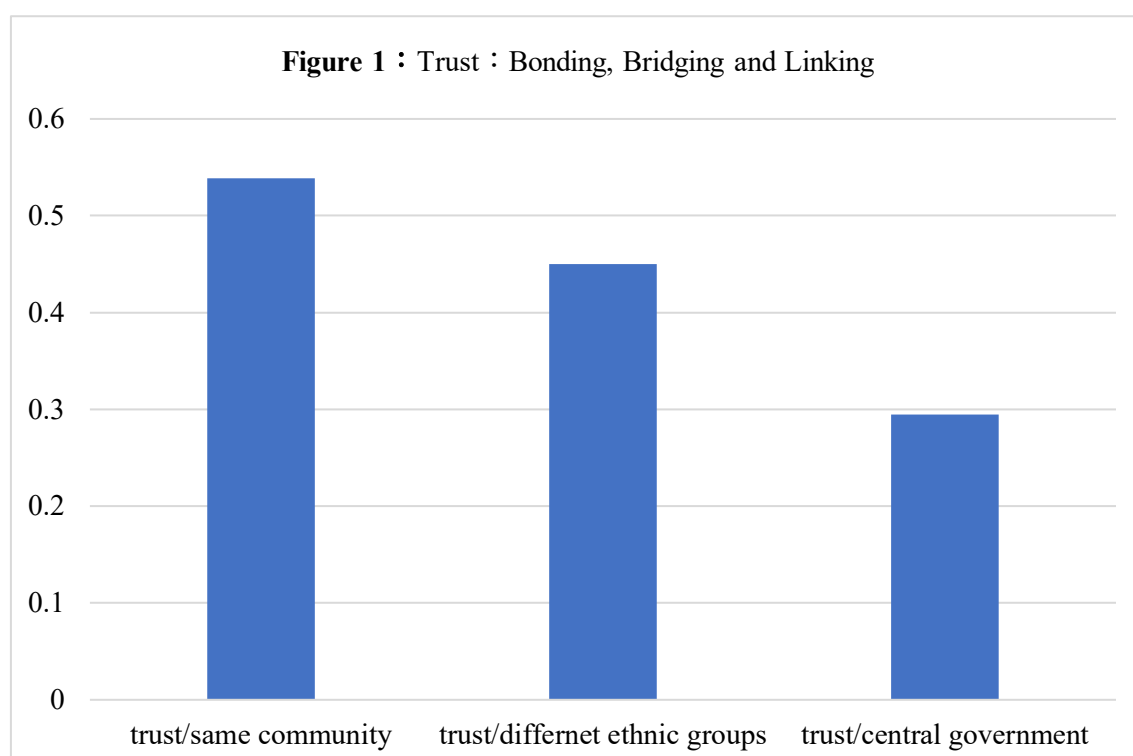
Survey items included, but were not limited to, personal characteristics (gender, age, education level, religion, ethnicity), level of trust among actors, evaluation of government, and perception of conflict factors related to social capital. Questions were measured on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree) indicating the degree of agreement or disagreement, or were mainly those that could be answered with a yes-no response. In those questions analysed using the Likert scale, the values were converted into numerical values after replacing the five levels as follows; "strongly agree" = 1, "agree" = 0.5, "not sure" = 0, "disagree" = -0.5, and "strongly disagree" = -1 for positive content questions, and "strongly agree" = -1, "agree" = -0.5, "not sure" = 0, "disagree" = 0.5, and "strongly disagree" = 1 for negative content questions.

## **5. Sample Overview and Data Trends**

The 299 athletes analysed in this paper are broken down as follows: 184 male football athletes (SA 53, NSA 131), 47 female volleyball athletes (SA 20, NSA 27), 68 track and field athletes (SA 39, NSA 29), 218 males (SA 69, NSA 149), and 81 females (SA 43, NSA 38). Regarding urban and rural origin, 277 were urban (102 SA, 175 NSA), and 22 were rural (10 SA, 12 NSA). By state, 41 (13.71%) were from Greater Northern Bahr, 19 (6.35%) from Greater Western Bahr, 43 (14.38%) from Greater Warrap, 16 (5.35%) from Greater Unity, Greater Upper Nile with 14 (4.68%), Greater Jonglei with 38 (12.71%), Greater Lakes with 31 (10.37%), Greater Western Equatoria with 51 (17.06%), Greater Central Equatoria with 24 (8.02%), and Greater Eastern Equatoria had 22 (7.36%). Regarding the age of the athletes, overall, the largest number of athletes were 18 years old (93), with an age range of 13 to 20 years, and an average age of 17.9 years. There were 10 married athletes (3 SAs and 7 NSAs). Regarding education level, 43 (14.4%) had graduated from elementary school, 143 (47.8%) had graduated or were enrolled in secondary

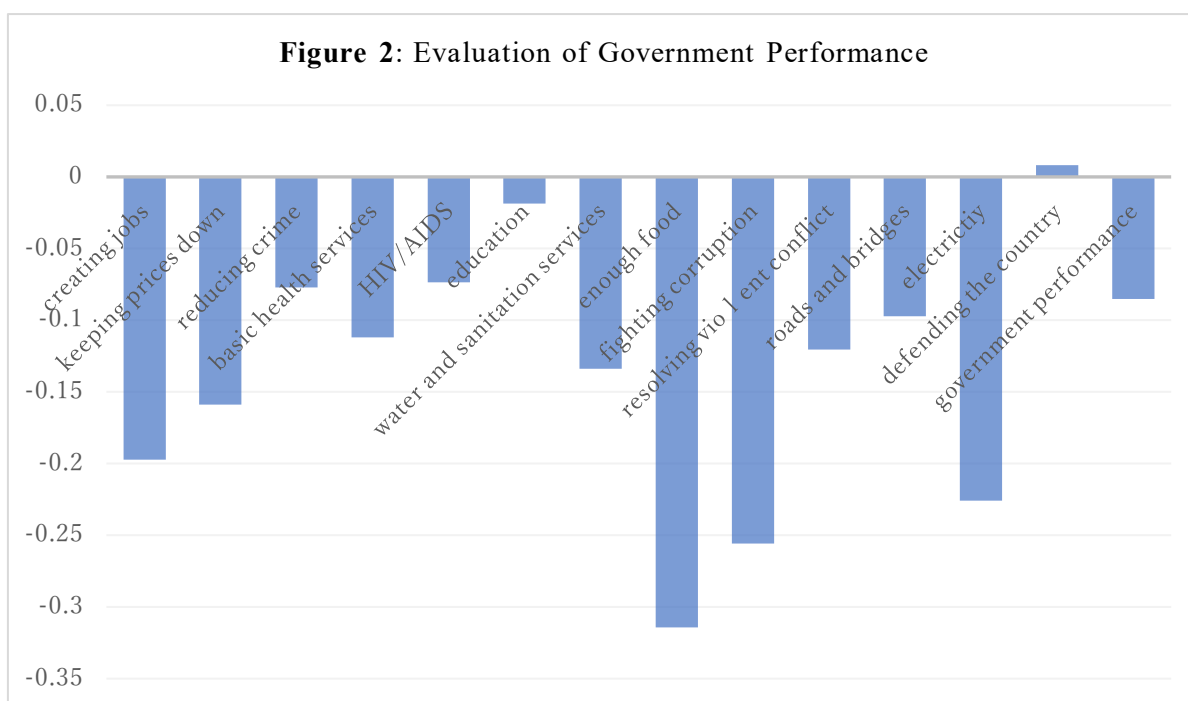
school, and 6 (2%) were enrolled in college. The literacy rate is 97.6%, which is relatively very high compared to the general level of education in South Sudan. Regarding religion, 95% of the respondents were Christian, 3% were Muslim, and 2% were from other groups. In terms of ethnic breakdown, 25 ethnic groups participated in the NUD, with the Dinka being the largest group with 160 participants (53.6%), followed by the Azande with 43 participants (14.4%), and the Nuer with 28 participants (9.4%).

In this study, we set up a "trust" variable, which is most commonly used as a proxy for social capital, to ascertain the extent to which athletes trust the actors surrounding them. Specifically, we asked questions regarding the level of trust in "family," "different families in the community," "different clans in the community," "different ethnic groups," and "central government." Responses were made using the Likert scale described above, and the values were converted to numerical values and averaged. Furthermore, based on Putnam and Woolcock's categories of social capital, the categories of "family," "different families within the community," and "different clans within the community" were summed and averaged to measure "bonding" social capital in the community. The "different ethnic groups" was defined as "bridging" social capital, and "central government" was defined as "linking" social capital. We then calculated the average value of each category. The results are shown in Figure 1.



As can be seen from Figure 1, being from the same community has a higher value, followed by other ethnic groups, and then the central government, in that order, having lower levels of trust.

This result is consistent with the ethnic tensions noted by Koul (2020). Next, given the low level of trust in the government, we checked what their evaluation of the government was. As with trust, we used a Likert scale of "strongly agree" = 1, "agree" = 0.5, "don't know" = 0, "disagree" = -0.5, and "strongly disagree" = -1 for the following government responses: creating jobs, keeping prices down, reducing crime, basic health services, HIV/AIDS, education, water and sanitation services, enough food, fighting corruption, resolving violent conflict, roads and bridges, electricity, defending the country, and overall government performance. Figure 2 summarizes the results.



Surprisingly, all items other than national defence were rated negatively. The government's economic measures, social infrastructure, health, and education are rated harshly. Corruption initiatives were the least well-received, indicating strong dissatisfaction with the development of social infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and electricity. And the overall government performance was also shown to be rated harshly at -0.085.

## 6. Quantitative Analysis

To test the three hypotheses set up in this paper, we use the Difference in Difference (DiD) design model mentioned by Wing et al. (2018) on two groups ( $g = 1, 2$ ), the treatment group and the control group, at two time periods ( $t = 1, 2$ ) before and after the NUD. Let  $T_g = 1[g = 2]$  be a dummy variable identifying the observations in group 2. Since group membership is time-invariant,  $T_g$  has no time subscript.  $P_t = 1[t = 2]$  identifies the observations in period 2, and  $Pt$  has

no group subscript since the period does not change across groups. In this DiD, the treatment variable is the product of these two dummy variables and can be expressed as  $D_{gt} = T_g \times P_t$ . For example, in the first period,  $D_{gt} = 0$  because  $P_t = 0$  for both groups, and in the second period,  $D_{gt} = 1$  because it is the only way that both  $T_g$  and  $P_t$  are 1 for the second group only.

In the two-group, two-period DiD design of this study, the assumption of a common trend, i.e., treated and untreated outcomes, is a statistical model of treated and untreated potential outcomes (Wing et al. 2018). In this DiD, the untreated potential outcome is  $Y(0)_{gt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_g + \beta_2 P_t + \varepsilon_{gt}$ . If not selected for NUD6, the average outcome for Group 1 would be  $\beta_0$  in Period 1 (before NUD6) and  $\beta_0 + \beta_2$  in Period 2 (after NUD6). Similarly, the average NUD6 outcome for Group 2 would be  $\beta_0 + \beta_1$  for Period 1 (before NUD6) and  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 + \beta_2$  for Period 2 (after NUD6). Under the common trend assumption, the coefficient of  $T_g$  captures the time-varying difference in outcomes between the two groups. Implicitly, the group coefficients capture the combined effect of all unmeasured covariates that differ systematically between the two groups and do not change during the period of interest (Wing et al. 2018). Similarly, the coefficient  $P_t$  represents the combined effect of unmeasured covariates that vary between the two periods but affect the results of both groups in the same way. Thus, in practice, we refer to  $\beta_1$  as the group effect and  $\beta_2$  as the time trend (Wing et al. 2018). The model for the treated potential outcome is the untreated outcome plus the treatment effect. The DiD estimation equation in this paper is as follows:

$$Y_{gt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_g + \beta_2 P_t + \beta_3 (T_g \times P_t) + \beta_4 X_{gt} + \varepsilon_{gt} \quad (1)$$

The coefficient  $\beta_3$  of the cross term is an estimate of the NUD6 effect under the common trend assumption.

First, to test Hypothesis, "Conflict perceptions toward other ethnic groups are mitigated when trust is fostered through interactions through NUD6", for the dependent variable Y, "trust" was first replaced by the negative term "distrust" in order to make "trust" a proxy variable for social capital with respect to the relationship between athletes' social capital and conflict. We then used a Likert scale to measure whether "distrust" causes conflict in the relationship between the same community, other ethnic groups, and the central government. Specifically, with respect to the same community, "Mistrust causes conflict among people of the same family," "Mistrust causes conflict among people of different families within the community" and "Mistrust causes conflict among people of different clans within the community"; with respect to other ethnic groups, "Mistrust causes conflict between our community and the different ethnic groups"; and with respect to the central government, "Mistrust causes between our community and the central government."



Because of the negative content of the questions, they were converted to numerical values after replacing five levels: "strongly agree" = -1, "agree" = -0.5, "don't know" = 0, "disagree" = 0.5, and "strongly disagree" = 1. For the same community, the three totals were averaged into a "mistrust: bonding" variable. For other ethnic groups, the "mistrust: bridging" variable was used. For the central government, we used the "mistrust: linking" variable. These variables are the average of the sum of the perceived conflicts by "bonding," "bridging," and "linking" of negative "trust" that causes conflicts among the actors surrounding the athlete.

For the independent variable X, we used gender, age, education level, and the "emotional barrier" variable. The reason for constructing the "emotional barriers" variable was to examine the relationship of conflict perceptions with these feelings, given the reported existence of ethnic tensions (Kuol 2020). Specifically, we used a 5-point Likert scale for "having an emotional barrier to people from other states," and converted its value into a numerical valued "emotional barrier" variable<sup>5</sup>.  $\varepsilon$  indicates the error term. Since the conflict situation in South Sudan appears to be rooted in ethnic groups, a cluster analysis by ethnicity was conducted using robust standard errors. The data are panel data consisting of 598 athletes and 299 samples.

Tables 1 through 4 present descriptive statistics for the above variables, each of which is depicted so that the distinction between the treatment and control groups before and after the NUD can be made.

**Table 1 :** Descriptive Statistics for Treatment Group on the Baseline

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std.dev.	Min	Max.
Sex	112	0.62	0.49	0	1
Age	112	17.74	1.51	14	20
Education	112	3.72	0.96	1	5
Emotion to Other Ethnic Groups	112	0.27	0.69	-1	1
Government evaluation	112	-0.01	0.74	-1	1
Mistrust: Bonding	112	-0.73	0.25	-1	0
Mistrust: Bridging	112	-0.69	0.28	-1	0
Mistrust: Linking	112	-0.65	0.31	-1	0.5

**Table 2 :** Descriptive Statistics for Control Group on the Baseline

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std.dev.	Min	Max.
Sex	187	0.80	0.40	0	1
Age	187	18.07	1.52	13	20
Education	187	3.83	1.04	2	6
Emotion to Other Ethnic Groups	187	0.34	0.68	-1	1

<sup>5</sup> The "emotional barrier" variable was converted to a numerical value after replacing the five levels of "strongly agree" = -1, "agree" = -0.5, "don't know" = 0, "disagree" = 0.5, and "strongly disagree" = 1 due to the negative content of the question.

Government Evaluation	187	-0.13	0.67	-1	1
Mistrust: Bonding	187	-0.73	0.26	-1	0.5
Mistrust: Bridging	187	-0.71	0.29	-1	0.5
Mistrust: Linking	187	-0.69	0.32	-1	0.5

**Table 3 : Descriptive Statistics for Treatment Group on Endline**

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std.dev.	Min	Max.
Sex	112	0.62	0.49	0	1
Age	112	17.75	1.50	14	20
Education	112	3.90	1.05	2	6
Emotion to Other Ethnic Groups	112	0.35	0.60	-1	1
Government Evaluation	112	-0.24	0.70	-1	1
Mistrust: Bonding	112	-0.74	0.35	-1	1
Mistrust: Bridging	112	-0.70	0.37	-1	1
Mistrust: Linking	112	-0.68	0.37	-1	1

**Table 4 : Descriptive Statistics for Control Group on Endline**

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std.dev.	Min	Max.
Sex	187	0.80	0.40	0	1
Age	187	18.12	1.53	13	20
Education	187	3.96	1.02	1	7
Emotion to other ethnic groups	187	0.42	0.57	-1	1
Government evaluation	187	-0.21	0.65	-1	1
Mistrust: bonding	187	-0.78	0.27	-1	0.83
Mistrust: bridging	187	-0.77	0.32	-1	1
Mistrust: linking	187	-0.73	0.34	-1	1

**Table 5 : Descriptive Statistics for Treatment and Control Group: Panel Data**

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std.dev.	Min	Max.
Sex	598	0.73	0.44	0	1
Age	598	17.97	1.52	13	20
Education	598	3.86	1.02	1	7
Emotion to other ethnic groups	598	0.35	0.63	-1	1
Government evaluation	598	-0.15	0.69	-1	1
Mistrust: bonding	598	-0.75	0.28	-1	1
Mistrust: bridging	598	-0.72	0.32	-1	1
Mistrust: linking	598	-0.70	0.34	-1	1

## 6.1 Estimation results

Table 6 summarizes the estimation results.

**Table 6 : Estimation Results for Social Capital and Conflict Perception, and Identity**

xtreg	(1)	(2)	(3)
VARIABLES.	mistrust: bonding	mistrust: bridging	mistrust: linking
sex(male=1, female=0)	0.0490* (0.0257)	0.0537** (0.0271)	0.0628* (0.0369)
age	-0.00113 (0.00776)	0.00335 (0.00714)	-0.0120 (0.00910)
education level	-0.00556 (0.00507)	-0.00435 (0.0102)	0.00898 (0.00832)
emotional barrier	-0.0318** (0.0150)	-0.0396** (0.0173)	-0.0182 (0.0174)
time	-0.0460** (0.0195)	-0.0561** (0.0268)	-0.0384* (0.0213)
treated	0.00472 (0.0189)	0.0273 (0.0224)	0.0480 (0.0372)
DiDestimator	0.0448 (0.0379)	0.0552** (0.0271)	0.00699 (0.0389)
Constant	-0.717*** (0.134)	-0.784*** (0.0903)	-0.553*** (0.143)
Observations	598	598	598
Number of panel data	299	299	299

*Note:* Cluster Analysis by ethnic groups, Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

First, for bonding trust, gender was statistically positive and significant, while the emotional barrier variable was statistically negative and significant. This indicates that males with lower emotional barriers tend to increase bonding trust. The results for the DiD effect were not statistically significant. Similar to the bonding trust, the results for bridging trust were statistically

positive and significant for gender and statistically negative and significant for the emotional barrier variable. The results for age and education were not statistically significant. Regarding bridging trust, we also found that males with lower emotional barriers tended to increase their trust in other ethnic groups. Regarding the DiD effect, the results were statistically positive and significant. In other words, the results showed that through NUD6, the athletes' perception of conflict was mitigated in their relationships with other ethnic groups. And for linking trust, the results were statistically positive and significant only for gender, indicating that male athletes tended to have more trust in the central government than female athletes; for the DiD effect, the result was not statistically significant.

The above results indicate that male athletes perceive distrust as a conflict factor toward the same community, other ethnic groups, and the central government more than female athletes, and that lower emotional barriers against other ethnic groups tend to reduce their perception of conflict toward those groups. On the other hand, with regard to the DiD effect, the results suggest that through NUD increasing trust mitigates the perception of conflict in relationships with other ethnic groups, and the Hypothesis is accepted. Thus, the results of the quantitative analysis indicate that participation in NUDs mitigates the perception of conflict with other ethnic groups by strengthening the social capital of trust through personal interactions.

## **7. Qualitative Analysis**

Next, we present results from the qualitative data to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis. Specifically, based on the testimonies collected here, in examining the effects of the NUD theme of "Peace and Social Cohesion" the following questions were important: What are the athletes' perceptions of "peace" and "coexistence" and of "trust," that are important in enhancing "Peace and Unity"; what role do they believe sport can play in mitigating conflict perceptions?; and what are their perceptions of other ethnic groups; and what do they understand the NUD to be? We then ascertained whether there has been a change in the perceptions of other ethnic groups through the NUD6. For the testimonies used in this section, the method of interview, the state of delegation, SA or NSA and gender, sports type, and ethnicity are indicated in parentheses for each testimony, but age and name are not included to avoid personal identification.

### **7.1 The Meaning of "peace" and "coexistence" for the athletes**

The theme of the NUD is "Peace and Unity". When we asked the athletes to confirm what "peace" meant to them, their main testimonies were as follows:

- I think peace means to gather people together and to unite people with one heart, which means there is no fight, you enjoy and which means you can even eat together and there is nothing

that can make you fight, yeah, that is how I can understand peace (FGD, Central Equatoria, NSA Male, Football, Pojulu);

- Peace means togetherness through forgiving and forgetting what happened like the 2013, 2016 incidents that affected everyone, but the only solution is to forgive one another and forget and focus on the future (KII, Jonglei, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- Peace means to be able to live together in harmony without any conflict (Lakes, SA Male, Football, Dinka);
- Peace is something created by God and is one important thing we should have and it means living together without tribalism (KII, Jonglei, NSA Female, Volleyball, Dinka);
- Peace means bringing all the tribes without segregation (WBG, SA Female, Athletics, Ndogo);
- Peace can be achieved through social interaction when we interact with other people (KII, WES, NSA Female, Athletics, Azande);
- Peace to me can be achieved through dialogue, reconciliation, forgiveness and being united (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Azande).

As indicated above, the athletes testified that for them "peace" means being free from conflict and tribalism, people interacting, being together and living together, and forgiving each other. We next identified what "coexistence" means to the athletes:

- It means togetherness of different ethnicities (KII, Jonglei, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- Coexistence means being together as one people and being fair to one another (KII, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande);
- Coexistence means forgiveness and love (FGD, WES, SA Female, Athletics, Muru);
- Coexistence means peaceful living together without any conflict or violent (KII, WES, SA Female, Athletics, Azande);
- For me, coexistence is when people stay or live in a hate free environment and a place where people resolve their differences peacefully and forgive one another (KII, Lakes State, SA Female, Athletics, Dinka).

As the above indicates, for the athletes, "peace" and "coexistence" have something in common. The key to achieving "coexistence" is to bring people together, including people of other ethnic groups, in a fair and secure environment, and to forgive each other.

## **7.2 What "trust" means to the athletes**

For the next step, we asked the athletes what it meant to them to be able to trust someone. The main testimonies were as follows:

- I can trust some of the tribes in South Sudan but not all because I never came across all tribes. I trust them because I know how they act, how they behave and I know how they do their things (KII, WES, SA Male, Athletics, Azande);
- I trust someone who is honest and tells the truth, someone who can do the right thing (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Lopit);
- For me to trust somebody I need to live with the person for long period of time, knowing the behaviours of the person, and the person has to be honest (KII, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande);
- When you talk about trust in South Sudan, it is the biggest issue in the country because if I am to trust you, you have to prove to me that you are a honest person and are able to do the right thing and deliver accordingly (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Azande).

Thus, many of the athletes' testimonies indicated that in order to trust other people and other ethnic groups, it is important to be honest with them and to understand them. The current situation in the country concerned is that the security situation and weather conditions restrict movement to other areas, and on top of that, the security situation limits opportunities to come in contact with other ethnic groups in other areas (Furukawa 2023). As a result, opportunities to understand other ethnic groups are scarce. Nevertheless, the testimonies indicate the importance of providing opportunities for young people to come together and stay together for a common goal in order to deepen their interaction with other ethnic groups.

### **7.3 The Role of sports**

The NUD has as its common goal "Peace and Unity" and seeks to pursue this possibility through sports. Thus, we asked the participants what role they thought sports could play in enhancing "Peace and Unity." The main common testimonies were as follows:

- Sports can bring peace because it is through sports that people can forgive one another and join hands to work together towards one goal (FGD, WBG, NSA Female, Athletics, Balanda-Viri);
- If I have an emotional barrier towards a certain tribe or ethnic group, when we come and play together that emotional barrier will vanish (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Lopit);
- Sports can build peace and friendship because it promote social interactions between people of different tribes and that is where friendship can start (KII, Lakes State, SA Female, Athletics, Dinka);
- The role sports play is to promote peace and unity and sometimes we can forget some emotional barriers between ethnic group or it removes the difference between other tribes (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Muru).

Thus, it is hoped that sports will bring people together, create interaction with other ethnic groups, build friendships, and remove emotional barriers to other ethnic groups. Participants also stated that we can forgive each other and move toward the same goal of "peace." The survey identified a number of examples of conflict mitigation through sports. The main ones are as follows:

- Sports can indeed mitigate conflict like for example, some years ago, there was a conflict between our people of Eastern Lakes with those of Western Equatoria over issues related to farmers and cattle keepers, when the two states decided to organize sports matches to reconcile the two communities, people were smiling to each other and peace was brought between them again (FGD, Lakes, NSA Male, Football, Dinka);
- There was a tribal conflict between the Zande and Dinka communities in which movement was very difficult when trespassing to one or other community but today through sports we can visit each community freely without any difficulties (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Azande);
- There was a recent tribal conflict between the Zande community and the Balanda community which resulted in a loss of lives and destruction of property, but through sports now they are able to talk to each other (FDG, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande);
- I remember there was a communal conflict which occurred here in 2016 and for the last couple of years, people remain pretty much livid about what happened, but when the team was selected for NUD, we all came together from all sides to represent our state (FGD, WBG, SA Female, Athletics, Jurchol);
- There was conflict between the Dinka and Mundari communities over cattle which resulted in serious fighting and many people sustained injuries but later on a wrestling match was organised between them and they started to communicate with each other and live a normal life (FGD, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande).

As indicated above, there have been many cases where conflict has been mitigated through sport, leading to reconciliation between conflicting ethnic groups. In South Sudan, sports has been shown to be an effective means of conflict mitigation.

#### **7.4 Perceptions of other ethnic groups**

Next, we look at how they perceive other ethnic groups in the context of heightened ethnic tensions. The testimonies indicated a variety of perceptions of other ethnic groups. First, the testimonies of those who said they have a good impression of other ethnic groups are presented:

- For me I like the Nuer community because I like their height and they are people who cannot discriminate and they are social, they do not give up easily they always fight for their rights (KII, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande);
- To me I like the Nuer because they forgive easily (Jonglei, NSA Male, Football, Dinka);
- I have good impression about the Luo in Western Bhar El Ghazal, they are very good people. In the past, they used to shy away from people, but right now, they are always interacting with people (KII, NBG, SA Female, Athletics, Dinka);
- I like the Mundari because they are peaceful (Jonglei, NSA Male, Football, Dinka);
- There are some tribes that do good things like the Azande and Shilluk because they have a good culture (KII, Warrap State, NSA Male, Football, Dinka).

Thus, the factors that are cited as contributing to good impressions of other ethnic groups are their tolerance and sociability, such as being peaceful and forgiving, as well as their culture. However, the majority of these testimonials about good impressions of other ethnic groups came from Dinka athletes, while testimonials from other ethnic groups about their own ethnic group and those close to their ethnic group stood out. On the other hand, most negative testimonies against other ethnic groups came from diverse ethnic groups. For example:

- The ethnic group I have bad impressions of are the cattle keepers, they come with destruction of people's resources like what has been happening in Magawi, this tribe is the Dinka, they are stubborn (KII, Eastern Equatoria, SA Male, Football, Otuho);
- What happened between us with our brothers from Pibor about the abduction of children, the cattle raiding, these are stories that we have been told since we were kids (KII, Jonglei, SA Male, Football, Dinka);
- I heard that the Murle are bad people and they like killing without reason (KII, Jonglei, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- We have some stories around our country South Sudan about this tribe Dinka, there is a lot of corruption going on, and Equatorians are not given a chance to be employed into some offices (FGD, Central Equatoria, NSA Male, Football, Pojulu);
- There are other tribes who usually grab lands from other people by force where people are not given rights over what you have and at the end you end up losing everything (when they grab the land) (FGD, Central Equatoria, NSA Male, Football, Nuer);
- They are specific people within certain tribes that make them look bad like Dinka and Nuer because they have laid this great nation down and they feel like they are the superior over other tribes (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Muru);
- I do not like Dinka because they bring their animals and destroy our crops in our farms which could help in paying for our children to go to school. When you report such incidents to them,



they will just pull a gun and threaten to kill you, which makes me say they are bad people (FGD, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande).

Thus, it can be shown that there are negative legends about other ethnic groups and bad impressions relating to security. Furukawa (2023) made a similar point regarding the existence of fixed and negative lore and other negative legends against other ethnic groups. So, through the testimonies, we confirmed how the athletes perceive other ethnic groups in the context of rising ethnic tensions in South Sudan, how they view "peace" and "coexistence," and what role they believe sports can play in the current situation in South Sudan.

### **7.5 National Unity Day**

Next, in the light of the above testimonies, we checked how the athletes, including the non-selected athletes, perceived the NUD, which is held under the theme of "Peace and Unity." The testimonies were as follows:

- I think NUD is purely a day of peace, unity and social interaction because there is no another day that will bring people from all the regions to compete together while sleeping and eating in one place without any problem arising (KII, Lakes State, SA Male, Football, Dinka);
- National Unity Day is the day which was meant for athletes to be together, to interact with each other, and to know each other for the purposes of mitigating conflicts (KII, WES, NSA Male, Football, Azande);
- It is the day people come together, sit together and talk together to know each other so that it may reduce the bad perception towards other tribes (FGD, WES, SA Male, Football, Azande);
- According to my understanding, I see National Unity Day as a day that brings us together to be able to interact with people from different states and we get to have a kind of cohesion between us (FGD, Jonglei, SA Male, Football, Dinka);
- According to me, NUD is an important day for peace in South Sudan because it is the only day when young people from all parts and tribes of South Sudan get to share peaceful competition together (FGD, Lakes, NSA Male, Football, Dinka);
- It is a day of reconciliation to me because it bring athletes even from some communities or tribes that have issues with each other like Nuer and Dinka, when they go to NUD, you cannot even believe that they are the same tribes who have been fighting each other for years (FGD, Lakes, NSA Male, Football, Dinka).

As evidenced by the testimonies, the athletes recognized that the NUD is the only sport event that brings together youth from all over the country, and that it is the event where they share food, clothing, and shelter that enhances interaction and alleviates perceptions of conflict. This

perception and the objectives of the NUD are in line with each other, indicating that the NUD is widely accepted among the athletes. So, did participation in the NUD increase the interaction of the athletes among other ethnic groups?

- When we went to Juba, we met many players from other regions and we were not discriminated at all by our colleagues. We always went to the field, we did find people laughing and we joined them to share the happiness together (FGD, Unity State, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- During the recent NUD6, we were able to interact with Dinka regardless of our political differences, we were eating together, sleeping in the same room, walking together and even played together (Unity State, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- When I was selected to go and play in Juba, I met so many tribes and I was able to communicate with some of them and up to now we are still friends (FGD, WES, SA Female, Athletics, Muru)
- When we went there (NUD), we did not know who we were going to play against, but soon as we got there, we met with all the tribes and everyone was interacting with each other and nobody had a fight or something like that with anyone, this shows that sports can connect people and not cause conflict at the same time (KII, Lakes State, SA Male, Football, Dinka).

From the above testimonies, it can be seen that through their participation in NUD, they were able to interact with athletes of other ethnic groups with whom they had not previously interacted, and friendships were fostered. So, specifically, has NUD participation changed perceptions of other ethnic groups?

- Before I travelled to Juba there was something like mistrust, but when I went to Juba especially during NUD6 I managed to know people from other tribes and it gave a chance to change all those bad thoughts I had (KII, WBG, SA Male, Football, Balanda-Viri);
- Currently I do not have any tribe that I have bad impression of after meeting most of them during the NUD, like the ladies from Murle whom I was not ok with became my friends, so at the moment I am ok with any tribe in South Sudan (KII, Jonglei, SA Female, Volleyball, Nuer);
- It has helped me change the way I see other tribes because I used to hate other tribes just because of the things that were being said about them (FGD, WBG, SA Male, Football, Balanda-Viri);
- Attending NUD has somewhat changed my life because now I am more about peace than before, not that I used to love violence, but NUD has made me even more peace loving because of the experience from participating and linking up with a lot of people from other regions (WES, SA Female, Athletics, Muru);
- One thing is observed (during NUD) is that human ethnicities and race are not important things to base one's feelings on, instead what matters is the inside look of the person and I concluded that any enemy today can be your friend tomorrow (KII, Jonglei, SA Male, Football, Nuer).

The above testimonies also suggest that there was a change in the perception of other ethnic groups as contact was made with them through the NUD and as understanding and friendship toward other ethnic groups progressed.

Under the common theme of "peace and social cohesion," collective contact was made as athletes representing regions from all over the country gathered together with sports as a common concern. Not only through sports, but also through sharing food, clothing, and shelter, the stereotypical negative feelings and prejudices toward other ethnic groups were reduced, and the perception of conflict was mitigated in the relationship with other ethnic groups. In South Sudan, repeated conflicts have increased ethnic tensions, and rebuilding trust among ethnic groups is extremely important for the nation-building of the newly born country. The fact that sports have been shown to be able to help in this regard is an important suggestion in future support for peacebuilding.

## **8. Conclusions**

South Sudan seceded from Sudan in July 2011 after half a century of conflict. However, conflict erupted again in December 2013. The instability since then has heightened ethnic tensions, making it essential to rebuild trust among ethnic groups in order to build the newly born nation. On the other hand, peacebuilding in South Sudan has been based on liberal peacebuilding theory, which, as Paris & Sisk (2009) point out, has created the gap between the exogenous top down approach and the traditional local practices which generated a dilemma that inhibits local actors. Local society, including citizens, has been marginalized in both the peace agreement process and the subsequent implementation process (Donais 2012).

Under these circumstances, the direction of support through a "local turn" approach that broadly involves the public for social cohesion (de Coning et. al. 2023) has been explored, and a "National Day of Unity" has been held since 2016 with the objective of "peace and social cohesion". In this study, we collected data and testimonials from participants and non-participants of the NUD6 held in 2022. This was carried out for the pre- and post-treatment and control groups in order to examine the effectiveness of the "Sport for Peace" support, which has been limited to date as a peacebuilding activity. We then examined the intervention effects of the NUD6 on conflict awareness for all ethnic groups using a mixed method combining quantitative panel data and qualitative data analysis based on testimonials.

In the quantitative analysis, Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital was used to support the hypothesis that "The perception of conflict against other ethnic groups will be mitigated as trust is fostered through NUD6 interactions." The results were statistically significant, and the hypothesis was accepted. In addition, qualitative data were used to contextualize the results of the quantitative analysis. The testimonies obtained indicated the meaning of "peace" and "coexistence" for the athletes and also confirmed the role of sport in mitigating conflict. The

testimonies also showed that during the NUD, the athletes had many opportunities to interact with other ethnic groups, that trust was fostered through eating and playing games together, and that in fostering trust, NUD6 provided a place for "peaceful coexistence," where people could spend time together and understand each other in a peaceful environment. In the "peaceful coexistence" setting, contact was made with athletes of other ethnic groups, which led to a decrease in stereotypical negative prejudice against other ethnic groups and a decrease in the perception of the need for conflict with other ethnic groups, as understanding and friendships with them were developed.

In addition, a specific finding from the research on actual sports/peace activities in South Sudan is that the athletes recognize that the NUD is the only sport event that brings together youth from all over the country and that they share food, clothing, and shelter, which enhances interaction and mitigates perceptions of conflict. This is a testament to the acceptance of sports as a depoliticized and neutral form of support in the midst of high tensions between ethnic groups.

On the other hand, what is noteworthy as a new finding from our research is that the testimonies of the athletes revealed that there are many cases in South Sudan where sport has contributed to conflict mitigation. In applying the "local turn" approach (Mac Ginty 2013) to the theme of "peace and social cohesion," the fact that sport has actually contributed to conflict mitigation is an important finding for future consideration of sport and peace activities in South Sudan. In addition, it is important to continue the implementation of NUD in order to develop this knowledge. Continuation will lead to a deeper understanding of other ethnic groups and a greater sense of "peace and social cohesion" among the NUD participants.

In addition, the awareness of NUD will be further increased, and as athletes who have experienced NUD return to their hometowns and share their NUD experiences, the awareness of "peace and social cohesion" will spread not only among the athletes, but also in their communities. This will lead to a reduction in prejudice and stereotypical negative impressions of other ethnic groups in the community and likely lead to broader social cohesion by reducing the need for perception of conflict against other ethnic groups in the community as well as the athletes. In other words, as Putnam notes, increasing social connections through trust promotes greater social solidarity and social cohesion through the contribution of "bridging" individuals to the larger collective whole (Putnam 2000), and in South Sudan, NUD definitely has the potential to promote greater social cohesion, not only among athletes but also within their own communities (Putnam 2000).

In addition to the above, the potential contribution of sporting events to peacebuilding is a useful finding, not only in the context of South Sudan, but also in considering the role of sport in future peacebuilding theory. It is hoped that sporting events will not only accumulate as examples of sport support for peace, but also be recognized as a tool for endogenous development through

local actors, which is the task of "Adaptive Peacebuilding" in the discussion of peacebuilding theory.

We now discuss the limitations of this study. In our research, panel data and testimonials from the treatment and control groups were used to examine the effects of NUD6 on athletes. However, the effects of NUD are not limited to athletes, and a survey of citizens other than athletes with a broader target of NUD interventions is also needed. This study could not be conducted due to security and budget concerns, but should be included in future research.

Next, we describe the implications of our research for policy and practice. In peacebuilding assistance, sports are rarely a focus area compared to other areas such as socioeconomic infrastructure, agriculture, health, education and other sectors, and this is also the case in South Sudan. In fact, according to MoCYS, sports support has been extremely limited, with only the provision of balls from UNICEF in the past as non-NUD support (MOCYs interview). However, the analysis in this paper has shown the effectiveness of support through sports, and it should be expected that sports will be recognized and included as an effective tool in the country's development policy.

In addition, from the perspective of the "local turn" approach, it is desirable that the NUD be held in regions other than Juba. In addition, NUD7 in 2023 was held with an emphasis on the percentage of female participation, as men's football, the most popular sport in South Sudan, was excluded from the program. This may have resulted in fewer spectators and less attention than in previous NUDs. While the issue of gender disparity in sports is an important issue in South Sudan, it is hoped that a wide range of sporting disciplines, including men's football, will again be adopted in NUD in order to enhance the effects shown in this study in a situation where "peace and social cohesion" have not yet been achieved. It is expected that this will further promote awareness of "peace and social cohesion" among more athletes and spectators, as well as through the media.

Finally, we discuss three directions for future research. First, while the analysis in this paper has shown that sporting events are an effective way to think about peacebuilding, the NUD also included programs other than sporting competitions, such as speeches at the opening and closing ceremonies and peace games, and to what extent these programs contributed to the success of the project. Second, it was not possible to fully examine the contribution of sports to the project's success, or to what extent living and eating together contributed to the process of reducing misunderstanding and hatred and increasing acceptance and respect. Third, music and dance are other tools that can be expected to involve a large number of people with minimal political overtones, but it will be necessary to verify whether these tools can have the same effect as NUDs. Finally, the developmental nature and power of the expected effects presented in this paper (the spillover effects on athletes, the community, and the broader population) is not monolithic.

For Adaptive Peacebuilding (de Conning 2020) to enhance the NUD theme of "peace and social cohesion," NUDs must be implemented on an ongoing basis, leading to social cohesion through an iterative process of experimentation, learning and adaptation. Nevertheless, the NUDs concept has changed the types of sports games. It is an experiment, so to speak, that leads to learning and understanding the most appropriate adaptations in the South Sudanese context. Understanding what worked and what did not in practice will have crucial implications for future global peacebuilding efforts using sport. By pursuing the future research directions outlined above, we hope we have contributed to increasing the options for peacebuilding assistance not only in South Sudan, but also in any society divided by conflict.

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**Abstract (in Japanese)****要 約**

南スーダンでは 2011 年の独立後も二度にわたる紛争が勃発し、民族間の緊張が高まるなか、「平和と結束」の重要性が高まっている。かかる状況のなか、スポーツを通じた平和構築支援の取り組みとして、全国スポーツ大会「National Unity Day」(NUD) が 2016 年から毎年開催されている。本稿では、NUD の効果を検証するために、2022 年に開催された NUD6 の選抜選手と非選抜選手を対象として、選抜選手を処理群、非選抜選手を対照群として NUD6 大会前後のパネルデータを構築することにより、また、彼らへのインタビューから収集した証言を用いて、NUD6 の効果を定量的、並びに定性的に検証を行った。具体的には、定量分析における主要な変数として信頼を社会関係資本の代理変数とし、同じコミュニティ内、他民族、および中央政府との関係において、不信が紛争を助長するかについての検証を行った。その結果、NUD6 を通じて信頼を構築することにより、他民族に対する紛争認識が緩和されることが明らかとなった。この結果を解きほぐすために質的データを用いた分析を行った。その結果、選手たちにとっての「平和」や「共存」の意味とその重要性が示され、また、紛争の緩和に向けたスポーツの役割についても確認することができた。そのなかで、新たな発見として、スポーツを通じて紛争緩和に貢献した事例が南スーダンにおいて数多くあることが明らかとなった。また、NUD6 期間中、選手たちにとって、他民族グループと交流する機会が数多くあったことや、一緒に食事をしたり、試合をしたりすることは、交流の機会であっただけでなく、選手たちが他の民族グループと友達になるきっかけにもなり、そのことにより信頼が醸成されていったことを確認することができた。このことを可能にしたこととして、選手たちが示した「平和」と「共存」を達成するためには、平和な環境のなかで、一緒に過ごし、お互いを理解することの重要性を挙げており、まさに選手たちが述べていた環境、つまり平和的な共存の場を NUD6 が提供していることを示す結果となった。なお、本稿の検証により、NUD が「開発と平和のためのスポーツ」支援の事例の一つとして、学術的および実務的な貢献につながることを期待している。

**キーワード:** 社会的結束, 社会関係資本, 開発と平和のためのスポーツ, 南スーダン, 平和構築, 適応的平和構築