



South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)



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The South Sudan Council of Churches is an ecumenical body comprised of seven member churches and associate churches in South Sudan with a strong legacy of peacebuilding, reconciliation and advocacy. The SSCC provides a platform to enhance the spirit of ecumenical cooperation towards collective action for peace. By its very nature, the Church 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 is long-term process lasting decades. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9).*

The SSCC formally separated from the Sudan Council of Churches in 2013 after South Sudan became an independent state from Sudan in 2011. Its history dates back to the late 1960s, when the Sudan Council of Churches was formed by three founding members, the Catholic, Episcopal (Anglican) and Presbyterian churches. Reconciliation, healing and peacebuilding are at the core of what the SSCC stands for, building on the instrumental role of the churches throughout years

of war, for example, as the architects of the 'people to people' peace process in Sudan. Through its regional offices, community-level, Inter-Church Committees and the hundreds of local churches within its membership, the SSCC reaches millions of South Sudanese. It is an unequalled network of people devoted to peace.

Member Churches:

The Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, the Africa Inland Church, the Sudan Pentecostal Church, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church and the Sudan Interior Church. Affiliates include the Christian Brotherhood Church and the Sudan Reform Church.

Vision:

SSCC envisions a just and peaceful South Sudan inspired and transformed by Godly values towards holistic and equitable development for all people.

Implementation Structures:

The structures of the South Sudan Council of Churches reach across the nation and deep into the grassroots level, manifest at regional and local levels through its regional offices and local Inter-Church Committees. At every level, it works closely with member churches, associate member churches, church leaders, women leaders, non-member churches, and in close partnership with international faith-based organizations.

Action Plan For Peace

The outbreak of violent conflict in South Sudan in December 2013 prompted the church to speak out within 48 hours to call for peace and reconciliation. The Church has consistently called for a ceasefire. By 2015, the SSCC took a strong position as a unified church movement against violence. In June of that year, during a spiritual retreat in Kigali, Rwanda, church leaders developed a vision and a call to lead the way toward solving the conflict in South Sudan. The Kigali Statement of Intent, a product of that meeting, provided the foundation for what would later become a long-term joint strategy, the Action Plan for Peace.

In the statement, the churches welcomed the eventual signing of the Agreement on Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS), which was then signed afterward in August, while warning that true peace would require the parties to the agreement to respect their commitments as well as the voice of the South Sudanese people. The statement stressed the limitations of the agreement as a strictly political process, since its form and content are not aligned with the aspirations of the South Sudanese people. The APP inspires social movement beyond the political process, underpinning it.

The Church in South Sudan has historically played an influential role in resolving conflicts, reconciling parties, and building trust and confidence between communities. The SSCC's Action Plan for Peace recognises the need for a long-term peace process to resolve not only the current conflict but also the unresolved effects of previous conflicts that continue to contribute to the current violence. The APP could take place over several decades, and its work falls into four focus areas, each pillar supporting the others in moving toward peace. They are:

1. ADVOCACY

Advocacy provides a means to influence opinions and policies towards peacefully resolving conflict. Advocacy aims to influence the policies of governments and institutions, including nationally, regionally and internationally. It is also about having the messages and the voices of the South Sudanese population

heard in the discussions about creating a peaceful and harmonious co-existence among the many peoples in South Sudan. In-country, this includes addressing hate speech and the culture of violence and revenge, to change the narrative from one of conflict to one focusing on peace.

2. NEUTRAL FORUM

Neutral Forums provide a safe space for South Sudanese stakeholders to discuss root causes of conflict and to be able to envision a peaceful future through dialogue. These safe spaces will informally support peace processes by building trust between parties to the conflict and helping them to find ways to overcome disputes and disagreements through dialogue. A process of 'personal transformation' will contribute to a more positive environment for discussions, and strengthen commitment to peace at the local level, to assist the South Sudanese people to achieve an indigenous, locally-owned resolution.

3. RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation will restore and heal relationships within the nation; only through forgiveness and reconciliation can South Sudan live as one nation. Using the model of the National Committee for Healing, Peace and Reconciliation as a basis, this process will begin with grassroots conversations leading to reconciliation at all levels. This approach will be accompanied by orientation and training of committed individuals as part of building a culture and network for peace to target all levels of society, also integrating existing traditional mechanisms. The Church will spearhead reconciliation and forgiveness amongst the people of South Sudan through transformation of individuals and communities.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A committed approach to peace also depends on strong organizational capacity and structures to manage large-scale and long-lasting processes with professionalism and accountability. The fourth pillar enables the mapping and enhancing of national capacity, strengths and opportunities within the SSCC, to build a stronger SSCC.

The Action Plan for Peace guides the church in its engagement with parties in conflict to promote peace in South Sudan. As a church-led peace initiative, the SSCC Secretariat is supported by ecumenical agencies including CAFOD, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Finn Church Aid (FCA), Kairos Canada, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Trocáire.