

South Sudan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program

Summary Report

Report Prepared by
The Initiative for Peacebuilding,
University of Melbourne

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Acknowledgments

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Dr Tania Miletic and Mr David Nyuol Vincent have collaborated on a range of peacebuilding initiatives over the past fifteen years. Tania and David co-delivered the 2019 Pilot program of the South Sudan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program, and held the request by past participants to ensure it was held again. With the establishment of the Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne in 2021, David who is a Practitioner Affiliate with the Initiative for Peacebuilding and Tania who leads the Initiative, were able to find an ideal home for the diaspora-focused peacebuilding work. We wish to acknowledge the innovative, transformative and courageous efforts David continues to progress in his peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan. We are ever grateful to have had Akuc Deng join our team in 2024 and work tirelessly to organise the program and facilitate engagement amongst leaders.

An Organising Committee was formed to support the design and delivery of the program. The organising committee generously volunteered their time and advice to assist in developing the program and to ensure that inclusivity was reflected in the participant list. The small group includes a range of community leaders as well as alumni of the 2019 Pilot Program including Mr Bol Aweng, Ms Akuc Deng, Mr Peter Pal, Mr Henry Makuei and Aguer Athian.

Professor Adrian Little and Uncle Bill Nicholson warmly welcomed the SSDPLP participants to the University of Melbourne at the commencement of the program.

We acknowledge and thank our invaluable session presenters – Dr William Abur, Dr Santino Deng, Essan Dileri, Peter Pal, Amiel Nuhaba and Dr Mujib Abid for sharing their expertise and knowledge with the participants and providing engaging workshop sessions. We sincerely thank Hon. Monday Semaya Kumba, Deputy Foreign Minister of South Sudan for joining us online and his ongoing support to enhance bilateral relations and diaspora engagement for the prosperity of South Sudan.

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The South Sudan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program

12–14 September 2024

**The Initiative for Peacebuilding, University of Melbourne,
in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Melbourne**

The South Sudan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program (SSDPLP), hosted by the Initiative for Peacebuilding, University of Melbourne is a three-day peace leadership program tailored to the critical role Australian South Sudanese community leaders and peacebuilders have in supporting longer-term peace efforts in Australia and South Sudan.

Background

Against a backdrop of protracted conflict and civil war, South Sudan has experienced a series of stop-start peace processes since its independence in 2011, and descent into civil war in 2013 and 2016. Continued delays in the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement have sparked an increase in subnational and inter-communal violence related to national political actors. Innovative approaches are now needed at national and local level to address the root causes of violence and instability. South Sudan’s diaspora community leaders and peacebuilders can play a critical role in

supporting longer-term peace, both within their communities in Australia and for political development and social healing in South Sudan.



The South Sudan Peace Leadership Program supported 47 Australian South Sudanese community leaders and

peacebuilders, who are currently engaged in a range of peacebuilding projects at individual and associational levels across Australia and South Sudan.



The Program builds on the success of the 2019 Pilot South Sudan Australia Peace Leadership workshop at the University of Melbourne. David Nyuol Vincent and Tania Miletic also led and organised the 2019 pilot, which was delivered with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Africa Division. Planning for the SSDPLP 2024 commenced in November 2021, soon after the establishment of the Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne. The early discussions included community leaders who were part of the 2019 pilot including Dr Santino Deng and Mr Bol Machar.

Collaboration with the Rotary Club of Melbourne

Rotary were invited to support the initiative in 2022 given the existing connections. Tania was D9800's first Peace Fellow and remains an active supporter of the program and engaged with Rotary; Peter Pal was a Rotary Peace Fellow in 2021 and Biong Biong is the district's 2022 Rotary Peace Fellow.

Locally, the establishment of Rotary Peacebuilding Clubs has further embedded commitment to projects as part of Club and District foci and the recent Peace Leadership Symposium held in commemoration of 100 years of Rotary in Australia and New Zealand. This landmark event was co-hosted by the Initiative for Peacebuilding at the University of Melbourne in 2021. The Rotary Club of Melbourne is supported this unique collaboration with the Initiative for Peacebuilding for the 2024 SSDPLP.

Objectives of the South Susan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program:

The three-day program provides a comprehensive professional opportunity:

- To create a platform for leaders to share existing initiatives they are involved in to address some of the immediate challenges they face; and help map peacebuilding initiatives and connections;
- To deepen connections amongst community leaders and peacebuilders within Australia and provide space to rebuild trust and unity for enhanced collaboration and cooperation;

- To develop and advance peace leadership knowledge and capacity to support increased peacebuilding efforts.

Project Team

This Initiative for Peacebuilding was represented by Dr Tania Miletic and Mr David Nyuol Vincent who led the design and facilitation, Project Officer Akuc Deng, with co-design and facilitation from within our organising team and networks. Event coordination and support was provided by the Initiative's Program Coordinator Tess Smurthwaite.

Establishment of an Organising Committee

The development and planning of the program involved the creation of an organising committee. A key role of the organising committee was to help ensure inclusivity and representation across South Sudan's diverse ethnic, linguistic and geographic communities. Strategies to reach across different groups and respective networks are a high priority to help meet the aim to build a strong and united diaspora community that act as a bridge between diaspora and country of origin, for the development of South Sudan and peace and prosperity of all South Sudanese.

Participants

The 47 selected South Sudanese Australian peacebuilders and community leaders from across Australia participated by invitation. The selection criteria for participation focused on:

- Demonstrable contributions to community and peace leadership
- Good representation across ethnicity and gender
- Commitment to ongoing engagement through the Network and projects

The 47 dynamic and inspiring participants came from different states in Australia and represent about six different tribal groups within South Sudan. Some of the participants currently hold significant roles within their sub-community groups in Australia in addition to being active peacebuilders.

They are individuals trusted by their communities who are able to return, encourage and continue to spread positive peace messages through their networks. This group was very special and had a lot in common, including a desire to unite the community, which created an opportunity for deep and

honest sharing throughout the workshop. There was mutual respect, and more importantly they knew what was expected of them at the end of this workshop.

The desire to reconnect outside this workshop and continue to advocate for peace and unity was very clear.

Following consultations, the following sessions were identified to be integrated into the program:

- Community peacebuilding and dialogue projects
- Positive Peace Framework and contextualising the challenges and opportunities for South Sudan
- Trauma-informed peacebuilding and social healing approaches
- Comparative learning and reflection
- Strengthening bi-lateral relations and policy development

Location

The program took place at the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus. It commenced at the Arts Hall, Old Arts Building and was mainly based at The Research Lounge on Level 5 of the Arts West Building.



Summary of the 2024 South Sudan Peace Leadership Program

Over three days, different experts and guest speakers shared their experiences of positive peacebuilding. The detailed workshop Program is found in Appendix 1.

Day One Workshop Sessions

Opening Remarks

Prof. Adrian Little welcomed participants and introduced Uncle Bill Nicholson. Uncle Bill, a respected elder from the Wurundjeri people, shared insights on Indigenous community, leadership, and history. He emphasised the cultural leadership inherent in his customary leadership. Uncle Bill described his increasing understanding of his own leadership role. He highlighted environmental challenges, the impact of colonialism, and the resilience of First Nation Australians and their ongoing peace leadership.

Prof. Adrian Little emphasised the special collaboration with the Rotary Club of Melbourne. He extended warm wishes to participants for the upcoming days. Adrian shared that his own father was a Rotarian and service of communities by Rotary was known to him. He also shared his own story coming from Northern Ireland and the influence it has had on his professional pathway and professional research interests that extend to conflict transformation and peacebuilding studies.

Session 1 Opening Dr Tania and David Nyuol

David invited participants to begin with an opening prayer, which was led by the pastor Mr Odangi Guwey, leader of SSCSA.

Participants were encouraged to meet someone new and learn something about them. Each participant was invited to introduce the other person to the group. This activity allows for participants to begin by focusing on the contributions and knowledge of other leaders.

Peter emphasised the value of small beginnings and the importance of strengthening relationships. Reflections on place and identity emerged from these interactions.

David provided an overview of the day's program and outlined the focus on exploring both formal and informal leadership forms. This is important to help locate the important role participants hold in influencing from where they are placed, and across time, as well as holding formal leadership roles.

Tania introduced the Johari Window (a classic tool to explore what information is known and unknown to oneself and others) and prompted participants to reflect on their personal leadership qualities in pairs, without sharing with the larger group. The Johari window top left quadrant emphasises things about ourselves that are known to ourselves and others. These leadership qualities may relate to our titles, and other things that are shared publicly. The lower left quadrant is those things that are known to ourselves but perhaps hidden to others, or only shared when we trust people. These may be the stories behind our motivation, our values and other more personal aspects of ourselves and our stories. The top right quadrant looks at what we may not know about ourselves but that others may think or know of us. This requires one to ask questions of ourselves and receive feedback from others. The activity focused on this quadrant. Participants were asked to invite feedback as a gift from their partner to learn how their leadership qualities are perceived by others known to them.

The last quadrant offers new information and knowledge to emerge that was previously unknown to self and others. These activities encourage communication and are part of the integral trust building and relational foundations supported through this program.



Discussion on Peace Leadership

The morning discussion provided insights into the nature of peace leadership. Participants were also facilitated in a discussion about peace leadership, that is leadership in the context of peacebuilding, which allowed for both the negative associations to leaders and leadership and a shared understanding of the type of leadership in the service of peace work that guides the workshop and program.

Some notable reflections included:

- Emphasis on the intrinsic connection between peace and leadership, noting peace leadership as involving the mobilisation of people and creating environments conducive to dialogue.

“People that are yearning for peace are the ones that are capable of peace leadership.” Dr Abur

- Highlighting the nuanced nature of peace leadership in different contexts, and how personal and communal experiences impact on peacebuilding efforts.

“Peace leadership is different for us, within our friendship groups. How we navigate conflict, our feelings.” Mamuch

- The importance of being critical of the lack of selflessness in leadership, and stressing the importance of giving to the community over personal gain.

“Leadership that I have seen, this is why I have a problem with calling myself one, it is a lack of selflessness.” Tabitha Amakou

- Peace leadership can be seen as including the qualities of integrity, transparency and honesty, with a focus on humanity and forgiveness.

“... true peace requires openness and the ability to accept others.” Victoria

- The need for compromise and tolerance, particularly in conflict situations.

“Peace leadership means two things: compromise and tolerance.” Dr Mark Deng

- Questions were asked of the effectiveness of peace efforts by stressing the need to address

local peace and unity before tackling broader issues back in South Sudan.

“Have we built peace here between ourselves? If we haven’t, how can we build peace in SS?” Wenyni

- Recognising the ongoing impact of colonialism and the need for re-unifying and understanding diversity among tribes.

“We have 64 tribes, communities that have been marginalised because of colonisation.”
Mr Odangi

- Recognising the importance of a shared understanding of the issues and approaches to these and acknowledging the valuable resources of peacebuilders within communities.

“The Initiative recognises how important it is to work with people who are best positioned to engage with priority issues.” Dr Tania Miletic

Group Work and Presentations

Groups were tasked with exploring themes of peace, conflict, and violence, and presented their findings on posters. Participants were invited to explore and discuss in small groups their understanding of the key concepts of violence, conflict and peace. This activity helps develop shared language and holds space for different perceptions and lived experiences that different participants hold and the contexts that inform these.

The sharing raised the need to address structural and cultural aspects of conflict and violence, emphasising their relevance to the discussion of approaches to peace. For some participants, peace was partly “the absence of violence” but also acknowledged that conflict may persist, highlighting the importance of ongoing dialogue and justice in achieving peace.

For some young people who are born into relative peace, like in Australia, peace is associated with between personal well-being and health which supports growth in people and communities. For others, peace was linked to various forms of development, including human development, capability, and infrastructure development. It emphasises the ways in which peace fosters confidence, productivity, and ethical behaviour for social and economic development.

Day One provided a comprehensive exploration of leadership and peacebuilding, with valuable insights and reflections from participants on their personal experiences and broader societal issues.



Overall, discussions around peace leadership revealed a shared understanding of its importance. Leaders stressed qualities such as selflessness, transparency, and compromise. The concept of peace leadership was also tied to personal well-being, growth, and the importance of fostering dialogue and creating environments conducive to peace. Participants recognised that peace leadership is deeply relational, involving collaboration and inclusivity across communities and contexts.

Session 2: Initiatives in Australia and South Sudan

Tania opened this session by sharing her personal work experiences, setting a detailed and engaging example for participants to follow. She encouraged the group to reflect on and discuss their own initiatives, providing an opportunity for smaller groups to share summaries of the projects they are working on. David Nyuol started off with his initiative, below is an overview of the initiatives presented, categorised by theme.

Domestic Violence and Women's Empowerment

Queensland Domestic Violence Foundation (QLD DVF): By Mary (QLD)

This initiative aims to raise awareness about domestic violence, specifically targeting South Sudanese and African communities. The program is still awaiting funding from the Queensland government.

United South Sudanese Women on a Mission: By Victoria (WA)

This initiative celebrates South Sudanese women's contributions, focusing on annual events like International Women's Day, and workshops on domestic violence, mental health, and cultural celebrations. Victoria highlighted the power of unity in bridging divisions: "By just coming

together, we bridge people, strive against tribalism.”

Parenting and Education Initiatives

Several participants discussed projects focused on empowering mothers and supporting parenting, recognising the critical role mothers play as a child's first teacher. One participant noted, “When you educate a girl, you educate an entire nation.”

‘It Takes a Village’ Initiative: By Tabitha Amakou (SA)

This initiative responds to the overrepresentation of South Sudanese youth in the justice system. The grassroots project emphasises cultural identity and support for youth, celebrating South Sudanese Independence Day with young detainees and introducing programs like ‘Mamma and Me Time’ for mothers and children.

Education and Youth Development

Social Work Education: By Dr William Abur (Vic)

Dr William shared efforts to support universities in South Sudan, working on empowering young generations by promoting education in both Australia and South Sudan.

Building Schools in South Sudan: Apuot and Akuc (Vic)

Apuot discussed an ongoing school-building project in a rural village in Turelei, Twic County, currently educating children from years 1 to 8. She highlighted the importance of education, particularly for girls, as a cornerstone of national progress.

Akuc also shared an initiative involving two schools she founded with over 700 students in Twic, Warrap State, providing educational support and aiming to uplift academic achievement among South Sudanese girls and orphans. She also spoke about an initiative she is involved in in Australia, the South Sudanese Academic Society, whose vision is to create a generation of empowered, educated, and contributing South Sudanese Australians.



Next Gen Unite: By Mamuch (Vic)

This initiative is a charity focused on engaging South Sudanese youth through sports (AFL) and media production (Next Gen Studios). The initiative works with young people, particularly those in the justice system, to create pathways for success. Mamuch stressed the importance of involving young people directly: “Do young people feel part of this change that you speak of? Some of the ideas are great. Talk to young people.”

Community Building and Unity

South Sudanese Community National Associations: Peter Garang (QLD)

Peter stressed the need for unity within the South Sudanese community in Australia. He elaborated on the progress of forming a national body that supports South Sudanese people across Australia.



Peter highlighted ongoing efforts to promote community unity, regularly holding meetings to address issues affecting the diaspora and future of South Sudan. The initiative also seeks to involve other South Sudanese diaspora communities worldwide.

They are also engaging with the South Sudanese government on constitutional reforms, including discussions on federalism.

Unity and Cohesiveness in Victoria: By Bol Aweng and Andrew Ohido (Vic)

This initiative focuses on building trust and endorsing the interim leadership within the South Sudanese community in Victoria to address pressing issues such as youth justice and community fragmentation.

Media, Arts, and Cultural Initiatives

Rise of South Sudan Music and Arts Festival: By Kush (Vic)

Kush shared her passion for bringing people together through the arts. Her upcoming music and arts festival aims to unite South Sudanese communities through creative expression.

Documentary and Archival Projects: By Peter Akol (Vic)

Peter, a filmmaker, discussed his project of creating a documentary to educate young people

about the future of South Sudan. He has archived over 200 videos of peace agreements and political leaders, including materials on John Garang De Mabior, to publish online for future generations: “I want our young people here to learn about the history of South Sudan.”

Constitutional Reform and Other Legal Drivers of Conflict and Injustice

Role of Constitutions in Peace Processes: Dr Mark Atem (Vic)

Dr Mark is researching the role of constitutions in peace processes, and constitutional development in South Sudan. Dr Mark is also challenging some customary practices that have inherent gender and material inequity such as issues related to dowry. This work aims to contribute to more inclusive and equitable governance structures in South Sudan.

Diaspora Centre for Peace: Dr William

Dr William shared plans to build a diaspora centre focused on peacebuilding back in South Sudan, providing opportunities for young people to engage in meaningful projects and “do something for themselves.”

Drugs and Alcohol Abuse: Christine (Vic)

Christine stated that overrepresentation of South Sudanese youth in the justice system is partly attributed to substance abuse. An initiative aimed at addressing these root causes includes a proposed letter to the Prime Minister and Victorian Premier advocating for involuntary treatment programs. There’s a program plan/structure underway.

Christine shared her concern for the challenges her children face growing up in Australia, noting that “Our reality is here,” and pointing to the need for support programs for both parents and children to address cultural and mental health issues.



David Jock’s Initiative (SA)

David is an author to multiple books, he shared his work on writing children’s books, including a recent one titled *The South Sudan*, emphasising the importance of storytelling in preserving cultural heritage and educating future generations.

Overall, the session highlighted a diverse range of initiatives, all rooted in the desire to address community issues and create positive change. From education and mental health to

peacebuilding and cultural preservation, participants shared meaningful projects that span both Australia and South Sudan. Unity, empowerment, and education were recurring themes, with a shared understanding that fostering collaboration across generations and borders is essential for long-term success. The session concluded with a sense of optimism and motivation for continued work in these vital areas.



Day Two Workshop Sessions

The second day of the program began with a prayer, followed by reflections from each participant on what resonated with them the most from the previous day's discussions.

Tania and David led a session focused on the concept of peace leadership. They explored the dynamics of leadership and power, drawing on the ideas of Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau's views on nationalism, policing, and justice were discussed, particularly his belief that nationalism should transcend ethnicities and that reliable justice is essential for a nation to function effectively.

The discussion also touched on the role of young people in leadership, highlighting how modern leadership among youth often takes on a flatter, more collaborative form. Several examples of youth led initiatives that are driving change were shared, demonstrating the impact of young

leaders in various contexts. The session effectively built on the conversations from the previous week, providing a solid framework for deeper exploration of peace leadership.

One powerful reflection from the session was the idea that, "No matter the circumstance, you find a way to make a positive contribution, no matter what stage of the conflict." This sentiment connected with the personal stories shared by participants the day before, emphasising the importance of maintaining momentum in peacebuilding efforts.

David also raised concerns about the loopholes in leadership since 2013, particularly how conflicts in South Sudan seem to quickly reflect in diaspora communities. This led to a broader discussion about the origins of violence within communities. While many participants agreed that their cultures do not condone violence, there was a critical question raised, if this is true, where do these violent conflicts originate from?

The session left participants with much to consider regarding leadership, conflict, and the potential for peace in both local and broader contexts.

Session 2: Trauma-Informed Peacebuilding and Social Healing



Presented by: Dr. William Abur, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Melbourne and Dr. Santino Deng, Counsellor and Educator, and Chair of the Victorian Government's Youth Justice Expert Working Group.

The presentation focused on understanding the impacts of trauma within the South Sudanese community in Australia, particularly how trauma manifests from war, migration, and can be compounded by resettlement experiences. The discussion highlighted the complex challenges faced by South Sudanese individuals and their communities as they navigate the traumatic legacy of conflict and the pressures of resettling in a new cultural and social environment.

Below are some key issues discussed:

Trauma and Migration:

- For South Sudanese migrants, resettling in Australia can trigger trauma, particularly due to challenges in adapting to new social structures. This trauma is not just from past conflict

but also from resettlement stressors, such as culture shock and dislocation.

- Migrants often experience a "honeymoon phase" upon arrival, but this fades as the reality of resettlement, cultural adaptation, and feelings of belonging surface, creating further challenges.

Intergenerational and Transgenerational Trauma:

- The presentation underscored the concept of intergenerational trauma, linking it to the experiences of Indigenous peoples. Children born in Australia to South Sudanese parents often exhibit behaviours or emotional responses shaped by the unspoken traumas of their parents, despite never having lived through the conflict themselves.
- It was discussed that trauma can be transferred genetically, which may explain why younger generations born in Australia seem to embody characteristics of the trauma from their homeland.

Impact of Unaddressed Trauma:

- The ongoing trauma in the community can lead to a cycle of re-traumatisation, where individuals inadvertently trigger and pass on their trauma to others, perpetuating it within families and the community.
- Dr. Abur emphasised that parents may withhold their trauma experiences from their children, fearing it is too burdensome, which adds to the cycle of unspoken pain and confusion.

Social Healing and Peacebuilding Approaches:

- Traditional healing practices, reconciliation commissions, and community dialogues were presented as essential strategies for addressing post-conflict trauma and fostering social healing.
- A significant challenge within the South Sudanese community is the lack of language and terminology to describe trauma and mental health issues, resulting in stigma and misunderstanding. Dr. Deng called for professionals to help the community develop culturally appropriate language and approaches to these issues.

Advocacy and Stigma:

- Dr. Deng highlighted the need for advocacy in Australia, where individuals must actively seek support rather than waiting for it. He also mentioned that mental health conditions, such as depression or PTSD, are often stigmatised within the community due to cultural norms.
- There was a discussion about the connection between trauma and sexual violence, as well as the cultural taboos that often prevent open discussion and healing from these issues.

Both speakers stressed the need for trauma-informed approaches that incorporate cultural sensitivities and address the root causes of trauma across generations. They emphasised working collectively as a community to break cycles of trauma, heal, and rebuild resilience.

Biel Jal Liep reflected afterwards that: *“The lessons we have learned from you, other presenters, and one another will be with us for life. We will use the knowledge and experience to benefit our South Sudanese community in Australia and beyond. As South Sudanese the war has its consequences and has caused inter-generational trauma and I was impressed by the discussions led by the experts during the conference. God will reward you and your team for the remarkable program that you have done for us.”*

Participants gained an in-depth understanding of the effects of intergenerational trauma, especially in the South Sudanese community. The workshop highlighted how trauma, stemming from war, migration, and resettlement, affects leadership styles and community cohesion. A key takeaway was the need to incorporate trauma-informed approaches in peacebuilding, particularly those that address the cultural sensitivities of the South Sudanese diaspora.



Session 3: Community-led Peacebuilding in South Sudan

Presented by: David Nyuol Vincent

The session focused on a case study of the South Sudan community led peace process, led by David, who shared his personal journey and involvement in peacebuilding efforts in the region. David recounted his experience as a child who had participated in the war and expressed his determination to be part of the peace process. His contributions included the Pieri Process and the Pieri Peace Agreement, which have been instrumental in peace efforts in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA). He also spoke about transforming conflict ridden areas into "peace villages," symbolising hope and rebuilding.

A video was shown on "Peace Canal," an initiative that operates in areas of South Sudan where

many NGOs have been unable to establish a presence due to security risks. The video highlighted the important work being done in such challenging conditions, further reflecting the resilience and determination of those involved in the peace process.



After the video presentation, David responded to a critique with the powerful statement, "I am not stupid, but I am not brave either. It is your life that I care about," highlighting the deeply personal and selfless nature of his work.

The discussion then moved toward identifying practical steps that the diaspora can take to support the peace process in South Sudan. Some

of the priority areas include:

- **Community Engagement:** It is crucial for diaspora leaders to actively engage with their respective communities, encouraging them to participate in peace initiatives. The focus should be on community involvement rather than individual leadership, as people want to feel included in the process.
- **Unity in the Diaspora:** There was emphasis on the importance of unity among the diaspora, noting that when the South Sudanese community comes together abroad, it reflects positively on peace efforts back home. Whilst it is understood that there are many tribal, ethnic and language groups represented across the South Sudanese community, it is part of peacebuilding through nation building to seek unity and cooperation.
- **Positive Embrace of Identity:** Another key point highlighted was the importance of embracing South Sudanese identity in a positive light, focusing on valuing unity in diversity across the country's 64 tribes and integrating reconciliation principles into community initiatives abroad. Given the challenges faced, re-narrating and framing South Sudanese identity positively is important.
- **Financial and Organisational Support:** The diaspora can provide financial resources and raise funds for peace initiatives, or they can seek support from organisations like Rotary to help back these processes. Contributing to the construction of facilities and the delivery of

services can also make a tangible difference.

- **Government of South Sudan Diaspora Desk:** A Government supported "Diaspora Affairs Desk" was suggested as an important mechanism for diaspora engagement with South Sudan. Given the important role remittances make to the economy of South Sudan the desk could act as a central point for channeling resources and importantly for coordinating efforts to make a more structured and significant impact on the peace process. Another important function of the Diaspora Desk would be supporting information flows from South Sudan to diaspora communities, coordinating information on important political and social updates. It will also assist electoral information and processes for constructive diaspora engagement.

Participants reflected on how David's story and the peace process touched them.

Several points stood out:

- The importance of **dialogue and inclusion** in peace efforts.
- **Preventing mass mobilisation** through conflict resolution and community empowerment.
- The role of **spiritual and faith leaders** in facilitating peace.
- That peacebuilding also includes risk and courage. For example, David takes risks by bringing conflicting groups together; and on a personal level, by leaving his job and comfort in Australia to return to South Sudan to support this work.
- The value of documenting and sharing the experience of the South Sudanese people, as it gives confidence that the community can resolve its issues.

The session on various initiatives provided a platform for participants to share their projects and learn from each other. From domestic violence awareness and youth engagement to educational efforts and peacebuilding projects, the diversity of initiatives reflected a strong commitment to addressing community issues. These initiatives showed the power of community-led efforts and the potential for collective impact across generations and borders.

Session 4: Positive Peace Framework

Presented by: Essan Dileri

Essan Dileri, a positive peace ambassador and Rotary Peace Fellow, discussed IEP's Positive Peace Framework, which builds on the foundational ideas in peace studies of building societal structures that promote lasting peace, beyond merely ending conflict. Positive peace involves creating conditions that allow human potential to flourish, such as effective governance, social equity, and low levels of corruption.



Drawing on his experience in his home country of Afghanistan, Dileri noted that while there may be no active war, the country still lacks true peace due to the lack of human rights, especially of women and girls, absence of functional governance, fair distribution of resources, and social cohesion. He highlighted the brain drain that occurred after the collapse of the Afghan republic, where many Western-trained professionals left the country, further weakening Afghanistan's recovery and peacebuilding efforts.

Dileri explained the key pillars of positive peace as outlined by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). These include well-functioning government, equitable resource distribution, free flow of information, good relations with neighbours, high levels of human capital, acceptance of rights, low corruption, and a sound business environment.

He called for a focus on long-term peace strategies, emphasising the need for local empowerment and international collaboration. Dileri also introduced a grant opportunity through the Institute for Economics and Peace for peacebuilding initiatives.

The key takeaway from the session was that positive peace is crucial for sustainable development. It requires more than just ending violence, it needs strong governance, equity, and

justice to enable societies to truly thrive.



Session 5: Contextualising Challenges of the Positive Peace Framework Presented by: Peter Pal

Peter Pal, a Rotary Peace Fellow and South Sudanese leader, discussed the challenges South Sudan faces in relation to the Positive Peace Framework. He explained that South Sudan remains stuck in the "attitudes" section of the Venn diagram that distinguishes negative peace from positive peace. This reflects the persistence of harmful attitudes and mindsets that prevent the nation from progressing beyond the absence of violence to achieving a sustainable and just peace.

Pal also referenced Australia's past under the White Australia Policy,



contrasting it with the country's current progressive state, which allows for the inclusion and comfort of diverse communities today. He acknowledged the progress Australia has made in overcoming such discriminatory policies and noted how this serves as an example of positive societal transformation.

In his recommendations, Pal advocated for the use of "localisable cosmopolitan peacebuilding approaches," emphasising the importance of tailoring peace efforts to local contexts while maintaining a global perspective. This, he suggested, would be a more effective way to address South Sudan's challenges and foster lasting peace.

The key takeaway from the session is that South Sudan must move beyond negative peace by addressing ingrained attitudes, and that locally adapted, globally informed strategies are essential for sustainable peacebuilding.

Day Three Sessions

The third day of the program began with a reflective activity in a circle, setting a thoughtful tone for the day's discussions on peacebuilding and identity. Participants were engaged in a **comparative learning** case study session on peacebuilding challenges and learnings from Rwanda with Amiel Nubaha. He also shared his insights on peacebuilding through a Rwandan lens, reflecting on the importance of intergenerational wisdom.

Amiel began this session with an activity, that encouraged participants to reflect on their sense of belonging and identify, by saying how strongly they felt one place was home: Australia or South Sudan, or both. Some felt more closely connected to **South Sudan (6 participants)** as home. As one person expressed, "After 20 years, I still don't belong. I'm not seen as part of Australia, so I belong there (South Sudan)."

For others it was more **Australia (14 participants)**: "I still think South Sudan is good, but Australia gave me opportunities and welcomed me the most," while another said, "I'm an Australian citizen. My kids are born here. I stick with Australia, even though I won't forget my identity."

For other there was a more fluid **Dual Identity (about 10 participants)**: This group highlighted the dynamic nature of belonging. "We forge a new identity. There's a new identity that we belong to, but it is a matter of finding the balance."

Amiel then reflected on peacebuilding in Rwanda. He shared his personal story of being born in a refugee camp in Zambia and growing up amidst the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. He emphasised how intergenerational trauma, and unresolved conflicts continue to affect refugee communities, even after resettlement in new countries. His sharing focused on the impacts of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which resulted in the deaths of around 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus. He noted the ways in which colonialism shaped the empowerment of minority groups (Tutsis) over the majority (Hutus), which sowed seeds of division and inequity. On request, Amiel talked about some of the limitations of the Gacacca courts, designed to address war crimes and genocide, often created more conflicts as people sought justice in flawed and personal ways. These local courts, although an attempt at reconciliation, left unresolved tensions.

Despite post-genocide progress towards greater peace in Rwanda, peacebuilding remains an important ongoing process in Rwanda, with many of the struggles carried over into the diaspora communities in Australia.

Amiel also stressed that even in apolitical events, like family gatherings and cultural festivals, there is an opportunity for peacebuilding through truth-telling, story sharing, and memorial services.



Key Reflections

- The importance of including the **diaspora** in peacebuilding efforts, both financially and socially.
- Encouraging the **South Sudanese community** in Australia to unite and support



peace processes at home.

- The complexities of **identity** for South Sudanese and other refugee communities, balancing life between two worlds.
- The ongoing **influence of unresolved conflict** in refugee communities, even in resettlement countries like Australia, where the challenges of integration and reconciliation continue.

Overall, this session provided deep insights into the ways in which peacebuilding is a multi-faceted, ongoing process, influenced by historical context, identity, and the continued impact of trauma

within diaspora communities. Amiel's personal narrative brought a powerful and reflective lens on how communities can engage in healing and reconciliation, both locally and globally.

In the afternoon **Dr Mujib Abid**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Initiative for Peacebuilding and Co-Founder of Salam Centre for Dialogue shared a comparative learning session of the challenges of Intra-Afghan dialogue following decades of conflict and intervention in Afghanistan. Participants saw similarities relating to the long legacies of colonization and regional dynamics in ongoing conflicts and the impacts of power struggles of elite leaders at great costs to the people who experience great harm and injustices through violence and generational struggles.

Report on Rotary Club of Melbourne Luncheon Session

Rotary Club of Melbourne President Catherine Baxter emphasised the significance of peacebuilding efforts in today's world, where 56 armed conflicts are ongoing globally, and 92 countries are involved in conflicts beyond their borders. She remarked, "Now more than ever, we need to focus on building peace." Catherine also highlighted Rotary's long-standing commitment to peace, dating back to 1935 with the establishment of the Peace Park, where they have planted around 50 trees as a symbol of their dedication to peace. Peace is a



cornerstone of the mission of Rotary international and the Rotary Foundation has shown great peace leadership through the establishment of the Rotary Peace Fellowship program.

Invited remarks by Dr. David Goy



Dr. David Goy was known to David and Tania for his longstanding efforts to bring together community leaders in Australia and some of the challenges he has long worked with others on to progress these. Dr Goy addressed the disconnection between the "ideal community" and the "perceived community" and the complexities that surround this issue for many. He urged leaders in the room to explore these complexities and consider their aspirations for South Sudan and their lives in Australia. He

used the analogy of a tree, saying, "We are the trunk, and the people are the leaves. But what

about our roots, the social fabric of our society?" Dr. Goy questioned the strength of these roots and the extent to which South Sudanese people are putting their ideals of patriotism and nationalism into practice. He encouraged this as the group continues into the future.

Challenges Faced by the South Sudanese Community



During the afternoon discussion, several challenges facing the South Sudanese community in both Australia and South Sudan were highlighted:

- **Lack of Unified Representation:** A key challenge raised was the absence of an umbrella organisation representing the South Sudanese community in Australia and South Sudan. This disconnect complicates efforts to establish relations between the two countries, with some expressing concerns about the Australian government's lack of interest in facilitating such relations. It was also noted that the need for an umbrella organisation to access government grants and other forms of funding complicates and problematizes this further.
- **Fragmented Interests and Disunity:** The community's lack of common interest was pointed out as a significant obstacle to achieving their goals. One participant noted that "our disunity here is one of the cactuses," making it difficult to assist people back home. Leadership issues were also cited, with concerns that "everyone wants to be a leader," which impedes collective progress. The notion of leadership and struggle has been a problem, healthy systems of governance suffer when leadership struggles make pursuing community and collective interests difficult. Personal and political struggles need to be overcome to allow for support of shared interests pursued collectively.
- **Challenges with Engagement in South Sudan:** There was also discussion about the willingness of those in South Sudan to work with the diaspora. A recurring fear was that those already in government in South Sudan may not be open to including people from the diaspora in governance or development efforts. This is also a potential barrier to the welcome establishment of a diaspora desk for example.
- **Integration in Australia:** The opportunity to live in Australia was described as akin to "winning the lottery." Participants emphasized the importance of fully integrating into Australian society to leverage the opportunities available and work towards the betterment of South Sudan. However, there are real and confronting challenges of racism and

discrimination that the community have also faced.

- **Overcoming Stereotypes:** Participants also called for open discussions to combat stereotypes that the South Sudanese community faces in Australia. "We still operate on stereotypes in Australia," one attendee remarked, stressing the need to break down these barriers at all levels of society.

Overall, the session underscored the complex issues faced by the South Sudanese community, both locally and abroad. While challenges like disunity, leadership struggles, and stereotypes persist, the event highlighted the importance of continued dialogue and the pursuit of peacebuilding efforts through collective leadership and unity.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Monday Kumba Semanya

In an online address from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Monday reaffirmed the promises made as ambassador, emphasising that the plan will be implemented step by step and urging the leaders to not lose hope. Key points from the formal address included gratitude to the University of Melbourne and Rotary Peace for their support, as well as Australia's long-standing solidarity, particularly during the liberation struggle. The Deputy Minister also highlighted the critical role of the diaspora in shaping the nation's future, especially in peacebuilding efforts, and pledged ongoing support for such initiatives. The speech concluded by encouraging participants to leverage the program to strengthen ties with Australia and return to their communities inspired. The Deputy Minister noted the heavy reliance of the national economy on oil, which makes up over 95% of its revenues. Additionally, the Deputy Foreign Minister would like an online meeting with the Australian South Sudanese community leaders to address their concerns directly.



During the forum, participants were invited to form small working groups to discuss possible next steps or plans for implementing community focused initiatives going forward. The

discussions emphasised peacebuilding, unity, and cultural development for South Sudanese in the diaspora, with each state outlining specific objectives.

Leaders from various states shared their goals for promoting peace, unity, and cultural preservation within the diaspora. Key objectives included organising national dialogues, hosting cultural days, and mentoring youth to foster community cohesion and healing.

- In **ACT/NSW/NT**, leaders proposed moving the forum to different states, initiating a national dialogue for South Sudanese in the diaspora, and forming a national body.
- In **Queensland**, the goals include organising a thank-you letter, holding a sub-committee dinner, calling a General Assembly to discuss community healing, hosting a South Sudan Cultural Day, and planning a youth and women’s conference.
- In **South Australia**, the focus is on uniting leaders, promoting economic empowerment, holding ongoing meetings, organising a cultural day, and mentoring youth, while fostering collaboration and intercommunal dialogue.
- In **Western Australia**, plans include holding national prayers on Independence Day, engaging youth through sports and employment, creating a community dialogue for healing, and establishing a South Sudanese Women’s Union.
- In **Victoria**, leaders aim to organise a conference to address internal issues, network with other state leaders, recognise South Sudanese professionals through a database, and reach out to women and children.
- **Rotary** stressed the need to ask communities what they need, mentor youth, offer funding, and transfer expertise through mentorship to Australian leaders from South Sudan and offer support in areas such as technology and skills to South Sudan. Additionally, there will be efforts to remain engaged with the community and include women and other groups more deliberately in future initiatives.



Outcomes



As a result of the three days, many great outcomes were achieved. The program provided a comprehensive exploration of leadership and peacebuilding, both in the context of the South Sudanese diaspora and back home in South Sudan. Participants were deeply engaged in discussions on peace leadership, the intersection of trauma and leadership, and the importance of cultural and historical awareness. The diverse range of contributions from participants highlighted the varied leadership challenges faced across different contexts, from grassroots initiatives in Australia to larger peace efforts in South Sudan.

Participants developed their capacity to engage in strategic peacebuilding initiatives, strengthened their efforts through networking and collaboration and towards producing a series of recommendations for follow-up engagement.

There is commitment to:

- Strengthening the network and engagement in the agreed initiatives and other key peacebuilding activities
- Input into this Report that surmises key conflict and context analysis for diaspora-led peacebuilding activities and key lessons learned and priority issues for 2024–2026
- Community feedback sessions by community leaders to their constituencies
- A plan for 2–3 ongoing peacebuilding sessions to be offered by the Initiative for Peacebuilding through 2024–2026
- Information to participants for 2025 Rotary Peace Fellowship call for applications deadline.
- Discussion of participation in the 2024 South Sudan Forum hosted by the University of Western Australia
- Engagement in planning the 2025 South Sudan Forum hosted by the University of Melbourne.

Overall, the South Sudanese community continues to face significant challenges, including the overrepresentation of youth in detention, mental health issues, domestic violence, and a

generational leadership gap. The oversaturation of community organisations competing for funding hampers progress and that collaboration among these groups could enhance their impact.

It is noted that the tensions with mainstream society, particularly regarding over-policing and racial discrimination. There is an identified need to bridge the generational divide in leadership



and parenting. Despite these challenges, the community is very proactive in addressing issues related to peacebuilding, education, and identity, underscoring a collective commitment to unity and progress.

Many discussions emphasised the importance of maintaining and celebrating South Sudanese cultural identity. Participants recognised that unity, both within the diaspora and in South Sudan, is crucial to peacebuilding efforts. Initiatives such as the establishment of national bodies for South Sudanese people in Australia and the preservation of South Sudanese history through media and education were viewed as critical steps towards fostering unity.

The workshop underscored the influential role the South Sudanese diaspora can play in supporting peace initiatives back home. Through financial contributions, community engagement, and advocacy, diaspora members were encouraged to actively participate in the peace process. There was a strong call to establish structured support systems, such as a diaspora desk, to coordinate efforts and resources for greater impact.



The role of young people in leadership was a key point of discussion. Youth-led initiatives were highlighted as driving change, with participants noting the need to involve young people in decision-making processes. The conversations revealed a shift towards more collaborative, flatter leadership structures among younger generations, reflecting new approaches to leadership that align with modern peacebuilding efforts.

Another strong outcome of the discussions was the recognition of the critical role women play in

peacebuilding efforts. Women were acknowledged as essential agents of change, both within the diaspora and in South Sudan. Their involvement in family and community leadership, as well as in mediating conflict, was seen as vital for sustainable peace. Efforts to empower women in the diaspora, particularly through mentorship, capacity-building, and leadership development, were emphasised. Throughout the sessions, participants expressed a sense of resilience and hope for the future. The workshop ended with a strong sense of motivation and optimism for the continued work ahead.

Participant Reflections and Key Learnings

Deep Reflections on Leadership

Participants appreciated the open and reflective nature of the discussions, especially around peace leadership and trauma. The Johari Window exercise, which prompted individuals to reflect on their own leadership qualities, was particularly valued as it allowed participants to gain insight into how others perceive them.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

Many participants noted the importance of addressing trauma within the community and called for continued emphasis on trauma-informed peacebuilding. The presentations on intergenerational trauma and the impact of resettlement were eye-opening for many, especially in terms of understanding how trauma influences leadership and community dynamics.

Value of Shared Experiences

The sharing of individual initiatives provided a rich learning opportunity. Participants valued the space to present their work and hear from others who are similarly dedicated to community-building efforts. This exchange of knowledge helped create connections and fostered a sense of shared purpose across different initiatives.

Complex Identity and Belonging

The reflection session on identity struck a chord with many attendees. They appreciated the safe space created to express complex feelings of belonging and dual identity, recognising this as a crucial part of the diaspora's experience and peacebuilding journey.

Need for Women's Inclusion and Empowerment

There was a strong call to ensure women are fully included in peacebuilding processes. Participants highlighted the need for more women in leadership positions, both within the diaspora and in South Sudan. Women's voices were seen as essential in addressing issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and conflict mediation. The



focus on forming women-led organisations, such as the South Sudanese Women's Union, was a key step forward in recognising and harnessing women's contributions to peace.

Youth and Women's Engagement in Leadership

Given the emphasis on the role of young people in leadership, there was a clear call to invest in youth development. Programs like Next Gen Unite and others that focus on education, mentorship, and skill-building for young South Sudanese individuals were seen as critical to sustaining peacebuilding efforts. A recommendation was made to create more opportunities for youth to lead discussions and share their perspectives on peace and leadership. Future efforts will focus on empowering young leaders and women through initiatives led by them and ensuring that their voices are central to decision-making processes. Plans to host youth and women's conferences, such as the one planned in Queensland, were discussed as key platforms to amplify their voices and contributions.

Need for Ongoing Support

Participants expressed the need for ongoing support and collaboration. They highlighted the importance of having structured platforms to continue these conversations and maintain momentum in their peacebuilding work. Several individuals called for further capacity-building workshops, particularly on trauma, mental health, and community leadership.

Moving forward, there is a strong desire to maintain and strengthen the network of South Sudanese leaders and peacebuilders. Participants suggested the creation of a regular forum or platform for ongoing discussions, particularly focused on sharing progress in their respective initiatives and collaborating on peace efforts both in Australia and South Sudan.

Capacity-Building Workshops

Participants expressed a desire for more in-depth capacity-building workshops on topics such as trauma-informed leadership, conflict resolution, and mental health. They suggested that



future workshops should include practical tools and strategies for leaders to use in their communities. These workshops could also focus on addressing the cultural barriers to discussing mental health and trauma, which are often stigmatised within the South Sudanese community.

Structured Support Systems for the Diaspora

One of the key takeaways from the workshop was the need for better coordination and support for diaspora-led peace initiatives. The idea of establishing a "diaspora desk" or a formal structure to organise resources, share knowledge, and coordinate efforts was met with enthusiasm. This would help the diaspora contribute more effectively to peacebuilding in South Sudan and strengthen unity within the community abroad.

Building Bridges with Other Communities

There was a recognition of the need to foster relationships with other African communities and Indigenous Australians. Building these bridges was seen as a way to strengthen peace efforts and address shared challenges. Participants suggested organising cross-cultural events and dialogues to promote unity and collaboration.

Looking forward

The Initiative for Peacebuilding, University of Melbourne

The Initiative for Peacebuilding will host a **series of follow-up seminars** from 2024–2025 that will support opportunities for continued momentum and engagement focused on enhancing peace leadership.

The first seminar is scheduled for 18th of October 2024, in-person for Victoria participants focused on managing factionalism managing divisions within parties or associations. The

speakers are Emma Dawson of Per Capita with James Button (formerly) of Open Democracy sharing reflections from within the Australian Labor Party.

An early 2024 suggested event will focus on youth engagement; and peacebuilding workshops. Other seminars will be by suggestion of the key topics for online, hybrid or in-person events.

Ongoing peacebuilding professional development sessions will be offered by the Initiative for Peacebuilding through 2025–2026. It is hoped that funding can be sought for the **South Sudan Diaspora Peace Leadership Program** to be offered annually.

Plans are underway for the University of Western Australia to collaborate with the University of Melbourne to co-convene the **South Sudan Forum** in Melbourne in 2025.

Annex 1. Program

Three-day Program		
Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a platform for leaders to share existing initiatives they are involved in to address some of the immediate challenges they face; and help map peacebuilding initiatives and connections. To deepen connections amongst community leaders and peacebuilders within Australia and provide space to rebuild trust and unity for enhanced collaboration and cooperation. To develop and advance peace leadership knowledge and capacity to support increased peacebuilding efforts. 		
Facilitators: Mr David Nyuol Vincent, Dr Tania Miletic Dr William Abur, Dr Santino Deng, Mr Essan Dileri and Mr Peter Pal		
Thursday 12 September 2024		
Arts Hall, Old Arts Building, Parkville		
9:00am– 9:15am	Opening Welcome to Country by Uncle Bill Nicholson Opening Remarks by Professor Adrian Little, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)	Wurundjeri Elder Bill Nicholson, Adrian Little, Tania and David
9:15am– 10:10am	Program Overview - What we mean by peace leadership	Tania and David
10:30am– 11:00am	Morning Tea	
11:00am– 12:00pm	Understandings of Peace, Conflict and Violence - Small group activity on PCV (activity and discussion) - Practical trust-building and reflection exercise (straw activity) -	Tania and David
12:00pm– 1:00pm	Lunch at Research Lounge, L5 Arts West Building	
1:00pm– 2:30pm	Leadership discussion - “what are you doing at the moment?” Participatory activity mapping in small groups	Tania and David
2:30pm– 4.00pm	Group sharing of conflict and peace mapping exercise	Tania
4:00pm– 4:30pm	Reflection and closing	
Friday 13 September 2024		
Research Lounge, L5 Arts West Building, Parkville campus		
9:00am– 10:00am	Reflection on previous day	Tania and David
10:00am– 10:30am	Morning Tea	
10:30am– 12:00pm	Trauma-informed peacebuilding and social healing approaches	Dr Santino Deng and Dr William Abur
12:00pm– 1:00pm	Lunch Break (Rotarians invited from lunchtime)	

1:00pm– 3:00pm	Community grassroots peacebuilding and dialogue projects	David Nyuol Vincent
3:00pm– 4:30pm	Positive Peace Framework and contextualising the challenges and opportunities for South Sudan	Essan Dileri and Peter Pal
4:30pm– 4:45pm	Reflection and closing	
4:45– 5:30pm	Afternoon Refreshments and networking with Rotarians	Refreshments
Saturday 14 September 2024 Research Lounge, L5 Arts West Building, Parkville campus		
9:00am– 10:00am	Reflection on previous day	
10:00am– 12:00am	Comparative case study and comparative learning - Amiel sharing and discussion from Rwandan experiences - Dr Mujib Abid on Afghan peacebuilding	Mr Amiel Nubaha Dr Mujib Abid
12:00pm– 1:00pm	Lunch	
1:00– 2:00pm	Strategic peacebuilding Reflection on Lederach’s Moral Imagination (how to sustain the peacebuilding work going forward) Linking initiatives and peace leadership in Australia and South Sudan; and Next Steps	Tania and David
2:30pm– 4:00pm	Strengthening bi-lateral relations and policy development Dep Foreign Minister Monday Semaya Kumba, Government of South Sudan Q&A with Minister Kumba and Participants	Minister Monday Semaya Kumba
4:30pm– 6pm	Closing and next steps Evaluation	Tania and David