

LUND UNIVERSITY  
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

# Returning to Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan

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*Approaching Post-Conflict Return from the Perspective  
of Young Adults*

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## Abstract

Over two million people have returned from exile to South Sudan since peace was restored in 2005. Among them many young men and women who have mainly grown up in urban areas in Sudan. Northern Bahr el Ghazal state (NBeG) which borders Sudan receives the highest number of returnees. Yet NBeG is ill-prepared to absorb this influx of people. The discourse on post-conflict return widely perceives returning migrants as a source of development and reconstruction after conflict. The notion of sustainable return suggests that returnees need to reintegrate successfully for positive development outcomes. Socio-economic questions have thereby been at the centre of the debate while the voices of actual returnees have been largely missing. Therefore, the study explored return experiences of young returning adults to NBeG as to challenge recent conceptualisations of sustainable return in post-conflict settings. It suggested that several interrelated factors need to be considered when approaching questions of sustainable return. Further it showed that concepts such as preparedness, social networks and identity contribute to the understanding of individual return processes in post-conflict settings.

**Key words:** sustainable return, post-conflict, South Sudan, identity, social networks, preparedness

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## Abbreviations

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NBeG	Northern Bahr el Ghazal
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SPLA/M	Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement
SSCCSE	South Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States Dollar

## 1 Introduction

When in 2005 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudanese People Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and its allies 21 years of civil war came to an end. Over two million people lost their lives during this war which was regarded as the second period of conflict between the North and the South of Sudan and concentrated on the control of oil resources as well as political autonomy and self-determination of the South (Maxwell et al. 2012:2-3).

The GoS was arming splinter groups of the SPLA/M as well as the Baggara Arab pastoralists as to fuel a historical conflict between them and the Dinka of the contested Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG) region. Between the mid-1980s to the end-1990s the Baggara militias – the infamous Murahaleen – attacked Dinka villages and cattle camps, raided their cattle, burnt their houses, killed arbitrarily and captured children and women to be enslaved as domestic servants in the towns of the North. As a result of increased insecurity, deprivation of their agro-pastoral livelihood as well as droughts and famines thousands of Dinka families migrated to the North during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. In hope for security and relief they came to stay on the close territory of Darfur or headed further north to Khartoum together with many other displaced Southerners (Jok 2001).

Without the necessary skills for employment in the urban environment of Khartoum they had to turn to petty jobs and became cheap and exploitable labour. Southerners were regarded as *abeed* (slave) and perceived a threat to the Arabic identity. Their different appearance subjected them to discrimination in many aspects of life such as verbal harassment, denial of public services, racial profiling and arbitrary arrests by the police (Jok 2001: 109-110; 129). While some Dinka could establish themselves in the industrial labour market others became part of the informal sector. Thereby, for those who were born and grew up in exile their career was likely to be influenced by the particular socio-cultural setting of the Dinka communities of the North and the strong role of kinship networks among them (Yath 1991:29).

### 1.1 Research Problem

Over two million people have returned to their places of origin since signing of the CPA in 2005 and after the referendum in January 2011 which led to the founding of the Republic of South Sudan a few months later (IOM 2012a). Return has occurred mainly spontaneously but also through different return assistance programmes the largest being under the auspice of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) while implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)<sup>1</sup>. An estimated 230'000 South Sudanese have remained in Sudan out of which a

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<sup>1</sup> See for the use of terms in this study *Appendix 8.1 Terminology*.

great proportion is about to return (IOM 2013)<sup>2</sup>. The highest return rates have occurred in NBeG where estimated 460'000 persons have returned solely between February 2007 and October 2012 (IOM 2012b). As a result, returnees make up for a little more than half of the whole population in NBeG (IOM 2009: 13).

Returnees bring with them skills, experiences and new ideas and ways of thinking (Bailey and Harragin 2009: 20). This may be especially true for the many young adults who return after having spent most or all of their life in the North away from their places of origin. How this group of returning people integrates in a society they primarily or only know from hearsay is crucial not just because of their sheer number but because the youth is considered a driving force in post-conflict settings (Newhouse 2012).

But the context of NBeG in which livelihoods are being re-built and reintegration takes place is harsh. NBeG was severely affected by the decades of civil war and remains the poorest state of the country with 76% of the population living below the poverty line in 2009 (NBS 2011: 4)<sup>3</sup>. The state is predominantly rural and its population depends on agriculture and pastoralism. Food insecurity remains high due to disrupted livelihood systems. NBeG features also some of the lowest development indicators in the world<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, isolation and limited trade, seasonal floods and high numbers of displaced people within its borders keeps NBeG in a persistent state of humanitarian crises. The returning population puts additional pressure on the poor infrastructure and provision of basic services (Pantuliano et al. 2008: 1). Hence, South Sudan in general and NBeG in particular is ill-prepared for absorbing the high influx of returning people.

Return migration is a growing field of interest. Discussions however, have remained highly policy-driven as a result of restrictive immigration policies in Western countries and large repatriation programmes to post-conflict contexts. Based on the host countries' interest to control migration movements as well as UNHCR's current approach towards protracted refugee situations, repatriation has been referred to as the preferred durable solution (Black and Gent 2006). According to this view return is seen as the last phase of the migration cycle as returning

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<sup>2</sup> Among these as by February 2013 around 40'000 individuals stayed in so-called departure centres in the open spaces in Khartoum where they were looking for an opportunity to return. Due to increased insecurity in the border areas and the closure of the South Sudanese-Sudanese border due to ongoing tensions between the two countries 3'000 individuals remained "stranded" in Kosti, Sudan and 19'000 individuals in transit sites in Renk South Sudan the main entry point to South Sudan where they had stayed for the duration of up to one year (IOM 2013).

See for an overview on the geographic setting the map in *Appendix 8.2 Regional Map*.

<sup>3</sup> The national poverty line is defined at a per person consumption of 28 USD per month. 51% of the population in South Sudan are considered poor (NBS 2011: 4).

<sup>4</sup> For instance, 96% of the population does not have access to any toilet facility, 75% of the population is illiterate and the infant mortality rate lies at 129 per 1000 births (SSCES 2010).

migrants return to the place they belong to and simply come “home”. Additionally, with the increasingly discussed positive effects of migration for development, returning migrants have been seen as a potential source for development in their countries of origin and for reconstruction efforts in post-conflict countries. At the centre of the discourse has been the notion of *sustainable return* which emphasises that for positive development outcomes returnees need to successfully reintegrate. Despite relatively few studies on post-conflict return, the assumption of positive development outcomes as a result of return migration has become conventional political wisdom among governments, international organisations and NGOs. However, this conception has faced growing criticism due to the hitherto largely missing perspectives of returning migrants themselves (Ghanem 2003; Davids and van Houte 2008; Ruben et al. 2009; Zimmermann 2012). In fact, evidence from individual return experiences has challenged the usually assumed straightforwardness of the link between individual reintegration and positive outcomes on the societal level (Black and Gent 2004: 4).

## 1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The study places itself in the small but growing body of knowledge on return migration that includes the voices of actual returnees. By exploring the peculiarities of mass return to NBeG through the perspective of returning migrants it seeks to *contribute to a more up-to-date and evidence-based conceptualisation of sustainable return in post-conflict settings*.

More specifically, in order to do so this study aims at *understanding what influences the individual reintegration process of young adults* by exploring the issues they value as central to their return experience. As stated above, mass return of people to NBeG in general, and of young adults specifically is a little understood phenomenon but with presumably immense impacts on post-conflict developments in the new born country.

Return experiences may be perceived quite differently by individuals depending on their experiences during exile, their social profile and the place individuals return to (Davids and van Houte 2008; van Houte and de Koning 2008; Ruben et al. 2009). For more insightful results into the research topic it is therefore reasonable to define the purpose of the study more narrowly regarding a certain group of returning individuals. Therefore, the study is limited regarding these four aspects: (1) place of exile, (2) age group, (3) place of return and (4) duration since return.

Firstly, as already mentioned the study focuses on individuals that returned from what today is the territory of Sudan. This is because most returnees had been displaced to the North and to include individuals with comparable exile experiences. Southern Sudanese women and men in the North typically worked as day labourers and undoubtedly experienced considerably different



cultural and socio-economic living conditions as compared to returnees that had spent their exile in refugee camps in Kenya or Uganda or who had been granted asylum in the USA.

Secondly, at the centre of this study are exclusively young female and male adults between the age of 18 and 30 years. This age group makes up for a considerable part of the population with almost 20% (SSCCE 2010: 9). However, the choice of this particular age group is motivated in two respects. On one hand, young returning adults have spent most or all their lives in the North and have been socialised in their particular exile context. Consequently, their return experience may be substantially different from those who migrated as adults or of those who at least partly grew up in in the South. On the other hand, even though the youth has been a popular focus of post-conflict studies, the attention has usually been on the demilitarisation and reintegration of young ex-combatants while young returning refugees returnees have remained an under-studied group (Newhouse 2012: 3).

Thirdly, in terms of the place of return, return experiences in settlement areas with high returnee populations were selected. These are certain locations in Aweil, the state capital of NBeG, and returnee areas in Aweil East, the county that has received 50 % of all returnees to the five counties in NBeG (IOM 2009: 14). Therewith, the study seeks to explore the particular circumstances of mass return that is shaped by an environment of a high number of other returnees.

Lastly, in regards to the time frame in which the young adults had returned to NBeG the study focuses on the period from 2010 to mid-2012. The influx of people that had occurred in this later period has been anticipated with the referendum in January 2011 and South Sudan's independence in July in the same year. Thus, returnees included in this study may have a common motivation for their return. More importantly, all individuals had returned rather recently and were expectedly in the middle of the reintegration process. Despite this, the chosen time frame of two and a half years allowed to include individuals at different stages of this process as to take into account different perceptions and interpretations of return experiences.

### **1.2.1 Research Questions**

Against the background of little existing knowledge on individual return experiences in post-conflict contexts in general and on return experiences of young adults in South Sudan in particular the study seeks to explore the following questions:

<i>RQ1: What factors and circumstances do young adults experience as central to their recent return to NBeG?</i>
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By understanding the individual perspectives of young adults in this specific context the study aims moreover at contributing to a more multifaceted conceptualisation of sustainable return in post-conflict settings.

*RQ2: How can their individual experience challenge the current conceptualisation of sustainable return in post-conflict contexts?*

### 1.3 Disposition

This thesis consists of six chapters and is structured as follows: the first chapter introduced to the topic of mass return to NBeG and outlined the research problem and the purpose of the study. In the second chapter the theoretical background places the study in the academic discourse. The third chapter presents the analytical model and the fourth chapter the methodology including research design, methods and limitations of the study. The analysis presents and discusses the results in the fifth chapter. Finally, the last chapter concludes the study, answer the two research questions and reflect on the implications for future research.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Return Migration

The positive effects of migration on development have become a popular issue in the academic literature as well as on the policy agenda (Mossin Brønden 2012). The interest on the “migration-development nexus” has thereby mostly centred on implications of migration livelihoods and strategies for individuals, households or communities, on gender aspects of migration, the advocacy role of the diaspora, and on the effects of remittances (Van Hear and Nyberg Sørensen 2003; Kapur 2004; De Haas 2008). Consequently, migration is seen as linking host and home country through growing transnational networks that allow for investments, transfers of human capital, social ideas and entrepreneurship in the country of origin (Bakewell 2007: 17; Mossin Brønden 2012: 2).

Even though return migration has been studied since the 1960s the general conception of migration has long been one of a one-way process (King 2000: 7). Only with increasingly restrictive immigration laws in Europe and a number of large repatriation programmes in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s return migration has received growing attention. Initially, studies have focused on the actual repatriation movement from a human rights perspective that however tended to consider this act as the end of the displacement or migration cycle (Hammond 1999: 227). Thereby, studies have often centred

around the voluntariness of repatriation (Chimni 2004; Zieck 2004; Bradley 2007)<sup>5</sup>. Corresponding to UNHCR's "4R" approach of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction return movements were soon studied regarding their impacts for development processes and state reconstruction. Returnees were considered to give positive impulses through their investment of capital, knowledge and new ideas (Petrin 2002; Black and Gent 2006; Helling 2007). Nevertheless, (mass) return migration has also been understood as having potentially negative effects on post-conflict societies by putting additional pressure on already weak economic and social systems (Black and Gent 2004: 19).

The lack of large-scale data on returning migrants led to only few quantitative studies on return migration. Numerous qualitative studies however, have been carried out to investigate the manifold factors that make return a heterogeneous phenomenon (Cassarino 2004: 253). These studies have examined return migration from Western countries in terms of both, rejected asylum seekers and labour migrants (Carling et al. 2011). Relatively few studies have focused on return migration that occurs from one African country to another (Thomas 2009: 86; de Haas 2008: 2). Also, migration has never been an exclusive field of study but has rather been studied within different domains which have led to versatile perspectives on return migration. This multidisciplinary interest and the applying of different conceptual and methodological approaches however, have also caused a lack of coherence in the theoretical base of return migration and empirical evidence remains scattered (Arowolo 2000; Carling et al. 2011).

## 2.2 Sustainable Return

Positive outcomes of return migration refer to three different elements: the individual perspective of the individual, the objective conditions of individual return and the aggregate level of the home country (Ruben et al. 2009: 6). Concerning the individual level that is of interest for this study, the emphasis has been on objective socio-economic questions while a more subjective perspective on individual return has received little attention.

### 2.2.1 Individual Return as Socio-Economic Reintegration

Sustainable return on the individual level has generally been understood as a synonym for reintegration (Ruben et al. 2009: 913). According to UNHCR (2004: 8) sustainable reintegration is "the ability of returning refugees (as well as IDPs and others) to secure the necessary political, economic, legal and social conditions to maintain their life, livelihood and dignity". It is a process of adaption as a return migrant re-enters to the society of origin (Arowolo 2000: 62). The

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<sup>5</sup> Return is voluntary when the decision to return is made "after reviewing all available information about the conditions in their country of origin" (Dimitrijevic et al. 2004: 29). Accordingly, the decision to return is based on a free and informed choice.

process is thereby shaped by the legal, political, economic and social conditions of the context (De Haas 2005). By comprehending reintegration as a process return has been understood as the beginning of something new rather than the last phase of the migration cycle (Simmons 2000; Black and Gent 2004). Whether the return process has been sustainable in the sense of socio-economic reintegration may be measured in terms of achieving certain living conditions including security, employment and access to housing and basic services (Simmons 2000). Also, living conditions after return can be compared to those before flight or against the conditions of stayees. Return has further been considered sustainable when there is no dependency on external inputs such as aid or remittances and when returnees do not re-migrate (Black et al. 2004; Black and Gent 2005).

Clearly, individual sustainable return remains a vague concept with no consistent definition and measurement being found in the literature (Black and Gent 2006: 25). Moreover, as Cassarino (2008) criticises, these approaches are based on top-down knowledge which mainly serves the migration management agenda and the interest of the state.

### **2.2.2 Individual Return as Becoming Re-Embedded**

Recent studies have addressed more complex and qualitative questions around individual return from a bottom-up perspective. Noteworthy is the concept of “mixed embeddedness”<sup>6</sup> attempts to approach individual sustainable return in a holistic way (Davids and van Houte 2008; van Houte and de Koning 2008; Ruben et al. 2009). Sustainable return is a process of becoming “(re-) embedded” along three interrelated dimensions of economic, social and psychological embeddedness. Thereby, economic embeddedness refers to a sustainable livelihood, social embeddedness is mainly determined by access to social capital provided by a returnee’s social networks, and psychological embeddedness refers to the ability of individuals to construct an own identity as to find their place in society. According to the concept three major factors influence mixed embeddedness: experiences during prior migration phases, assistance and individual characteristics of the returning migrant (Ruben et al. 2009).

Firstly, in relation to prior migration phases Davids and van Houte (2008) argue that the causes for migration influence re-embeddedness upon return with economically motivated returnees experiencing return to the society of origin differently than forced migrants. Furthermore, experiences during exile may benefit the migrant in the form of work experiences, education and

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of embeddedness originates in institutional economics where it has been used to investigate the role of trust and social networks for the successful transaction of companies (Granovetter 1985). More generally, the concept has been applied to explain how a company, organisation or a person establishes itself socially and economically within a given society. By adding the dimension of identity, mixed embeddedness has become a crucial concept to explain migrant entrepreneurship (Kloosterman, et al. 1999). Finally, in regards to return migration mixed embeddedness represents a multidimensional concept that analyses return outcomes from the hitherto scarcely explored individual perspective.

participation in the host society which facilitate the establishing of a livelihood upon return (Davids and van Houte 2008: 179; Thomas 2009: 89). The process of re-embeddedness depends also on how well individuals are prepared for their return in the sense returning voluntarily and having had the opportunity to mobilise resources during exile to facilitate return (Davids and van Houte 2008). Secondly, the social profile of an individual in terms of personality, age, gender or marital status allows for different opportunities and possibilities and influences the individual return process and remigration trajectories (Ruben et al. 2009: 913). Lastly, the receipt of return and reconstruction assistance is considered important for building up a livelihood and becoming re-embedded (Davids and van Houte 2008: 185). Assistance from international and civic organisations, the government as well as from relatives and friends or the community of settlement has been considered having a major impact on re-embeddedness (Ruben et al. 2009: 318-319).

### 3 Analytical Model

Drawing from the mixed embeddedness framework, return is understood as a process of finding one's own place in society and participating in it (van Houte and de Koning 2008: 6). Understanding return as a process also implies that time plays an important role; firstly, in relation to life experiences prior to return that shape the return process. In this regard, Bariagaber (2006: 10) emphasises that it is not possible to understand a refugee's situation without seeing the different phases of the refugee experience as interconnected and integrated. Secondly, how perceptions of the return experience may vary depending on the duration since arrival is also influenced by time.

The suggested model incorporates concepts that have proven relevant for questions of individual return experiences in previous studies. Additionally, it incorporates themes that emerged during data collection and analysis. The model consists of three concepts: (1) preparedness, (2) social networks and (3) identity. Thereby, the model emphasises that an analysis of return experiences needs to go beyond looking at the three concepts separately. Thus, the three concepts are understood as being strongly interrelated and overlapping.

#### 3.1 Preparedness

Based on previous studies which found the context of reintegration, the duration and type of the migration experience and the motivation for return to shape reintegration patterns, Cassarino (2008) developed the concept of return preparedness. Being prepared means having the ability to return which is not only determined by a migrants willingness to return but also by the readiness to so.

*Willingness* refers to deciding or choosing voluntarily to return and on own initiative. Voluntary return has been associated with better prospects for integration upon return compared to forced return both in literature (Black et al. 2004; Davids and van Houte 2008) and in practice through the promotion of voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution.

The *readiness* of a return migrant is determined by his capability to mobilise tangible (e.g. financial and natural capital) and intangible (e.g. social networks and skills) resources during the migration phase or their maintenance from the pre-migration phase (Cassarino 2004: 271). Bringing a “suitcase” of capital, knowledge and work experience with them can positively influence the integration process of returning migrants (Davids and van Houte 2008: 179; Thomas 2009: 89). Thus, readiness depends on the migration experience in exile and on how the return context allows a returnee to make use of it (Cassarino 2008:1 02).

### 3.2 Social Networks

In the field of migration studies social networks have received attention mainly in regards to immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Klosterman 1999) but have increasingly received attention in the field of return migration (van Houte and Davids 2008; Ruben et al. 2009; Reynolds 2010; Christou 2006). In post-conflict settings that are marked by a collapsed infrastructure, weak or non-existent institutional structures and service provision, low absorption capacity of the economy and often unequal access to resources and opportunities social networks are indispensable. Social networks are certainly even more important when a livelihood needs to be built from scratch in such a context (Davids and van Houte 2008: 185-186).

According to Lin (2001) social networks are social structures of directly or indirectly interacting individual or collective actors. Embedded in social networks are different types of resources – social capital – which can be accessed or mobilised through purposive actions. Thus, social networks become valuable through the active engagement within them and allow for gaining or maintaining social capital. Returns in this sense can be of economic (e.g. information, opportunities, resources), political (e.g. hierarchical position), or social (e.g. reputation, social integration) nature or can lead to psychological well-being (e.g. life satisfaction, mutual understanding) (Akçomak 2011; Häuberer 2011).

### 3.3 Identity

The increasingly dynamic understanding of migration as a social process has brought to the fore questions about its long-term effects especially about the shaping of collective and individual identities (Benmayor and Skotnes 2005: 8). Ghanem (2003: 27) suggests that migration experiences to dramatically changing contexts and how individuals interpret them have

implications for their identity, their perception of “home” as well as feelings of belonging towards both, the host society and the society of origin.

Identity is a widely used term throughout different disciplines and thus with diverse connotations. Here the understanding of identity is based on Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of “habitus”. Habitus reflects a shared cultural context, a “system of dispositions” that individuals unconsciously embody and bring to a field through their way of being in the world, through expressing themselves and through social practices. The field thereby refers to certain social structures and historical perceptions that constitute a social environment and which requires the individual to respond in a certain way – according to habitus. The importance of habitus for migration is based on the dialectic relationship between the structured circumstances of the field and the individual’s actions, perceptions and practices that produces changing identities and affects how an individual orients itself in a given social field (Marshall and Foster 2002: 66). In regards to return migration almost no studies have attempted to examine how home and belonging are constructed after return (Holm Pedersen 2003: 4).

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Design of the Study

#### 4.1.1 Qualitative Research Approach

In order to learn about the research problem in a holistic manner that acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual’s experience and the context which shapes it a qualitative research approach was chosen. As argued by Creswell (2007) qualitative approaches emphasises the process in research which involved for this study an emergent design that remained flexible during all phases. Moreover, Schweitzer and Steel (2008) suggest to apply qualitative research strategies because they are arguably more thoughtful in outlining their particular underlying methodological assumptions. According to them this is essential when studying people with refugee backgrounds because such research tends to be approached from a value-laden human rights perspective. Accordingly, a qualitative research strategy is appropriate to serve the purpose of the study and the nature of the research questions of making those voices heard which hitherto have remained rather silent.

Inspired by phenomenology this study emphasises the importance of setting aside conventional wisdom and taking-for-granted assumptions (Lester 1999: 1). In doing so the researcher learned about personal motivations and actions through the informants own interpretations of the lived experience (Creswell 2007: 58). Through an idiographic approach individual experiences

were explored first and then reduced to a nomothetic perspective as to discover what of the experience is shared and what is unique to the individual (van Manen 1990).

#### **4.1.2 Approach to Theory**

Consistent with its research purpose and design, the study's ontological perspective is a social-constructivist one. Thus, knowledge and even common sense is understood as knowledge that is shared about the everyday life. Everyday life "presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:4). In this sense, social phenomena and their meanings are continuously constructed through the interaction among social actors and their perception of it.

This research is clearly based on concepts that return migration theory has put forth so far. However, because theoretical explanations for individual return outcomes were developed in consideration of very diverse types of return and contexts an explorative and constructivist approach was maintained during the whole research process as to account for the particular case of mass return to post-conflict NBeG. Accordingly, the study followed a retroductive approach combining inductive and deductive elements by moving between ideas and theory on the one hand and data and evidence on the other hand (Ragin 1994).

#### **4.1.3 Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative research seeks to understand the world through the interaction with social actors and the interpretation of their perception of the world and meaning-giving (Brockington and Sullivan 2003: 57). Schweitzer and Steel (2008: 9) demand for methodologies that are "responsive to research questions aimed at explicating salient experiences of refugees".

Thus, data was collected through *interviewing* as to let the young returning adults reflect upon the phenomenon of return and review their experiences. The interviews were of semi-structured nature and followed an interview guide that was designed with a rather flexible structure, open formulations but contained questions that followed themes that had been identified previously in the literature<sup>7</sup>. This approach has involved the researcher's receptiveness to surprising answers and to whatever was revealed. Such an open stance requires the willingness to listen and understand without imposing preconceived ideas on the phenomenon under investigation but to let it present itself to the researcher (Finlay 2008: 5). As a result, each interview was different and its progression was as much influenced by the interview guide, the researcher, as by the respondent himself. In this regard, a balance between keeping the focus on the research topics and "avoiding undue influence by the researcher" had to be ensured through

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<sup>7</sup> See the interview guide in *Appendix 8.3 Interview Guide*.



establishing “good rapport and empathy” as to collect in-depth data (Lester 1999: 2). Given the fact that all the interviews were conducted with the help of a translator and that the researcher was an outsider in many ways<sup>8</sup> this was a challenging but not impossible undertaking.

As mentioned by Creswell (2007) qualitative data tends to be collected in natural settings sensitive to the people under study. Thus, data was collected in everyday life settings of the young returning adults - that is in their huts, under a tree in their settlement or in market areas. While not meant to be an explicit research method, the considerable time spent with and around returnees has enriched the interview data through impressions of direct *observation* and *spontaneous conversations* with the study participants, the elderly among the returning population, their chiefs and other members of the community. To be mentioned here are also observations that did not directly inform the research question but which helped to better understand the research problem and the circumstances of return in NBeG. These were insights into the humanitarian cluster system that coordinates responses and preparedness to humanitarian emergencies out of which the mass arrival of returnees is one. Another insightful observation was the actual arrival of returning households and individuals by airplane directly from Khartoum to Aweil town in NBeG.

Several *key informant*<sup>9</sup> interviews and often conventional discussions with NGO and UN staff as well as government officials<sup>10</sup> were conducted throughout the data collection phase. However, as mentioned by Bryman (2012) information from key informants may hold views that are different from the social reality of study participants. While key informants indeed seemed to represent the particular interests of their institution, the interviews nevertheless proved valuable for the understanding of the context. Also, new aspects on the return phenomenon emerged which then could be included and explored in the following interviews with returnees.

Access to the study participants did not necessarily depend on *gatekeepers*. However, some individuals eased the research process considerably. Through consultation of the state government’s Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) and an informal and rather symbolic approval letter the study found acceptance among local administrators and chiefs at the study sites. Additionally, the two translators functioned also as research assistants through identifying potential study participants and creating a good atmosphere for the interview. While their local knowledge was a great asset it must also be acknowledged that as suggested by Scheyvens and Story (2003) their own age, gender and social views may have influenced the selection of the sample.

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<sup>8</sup> See for a detailed discussion on the role of the researcher under *4.6 Trustworthiness*.

<sup>9</sup> See for a detailed list of key informants *Appendix 8.4 Key Informants*.

<sup>10</sup> Government officials belonged to the South Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief Commission (RRC) for NBeG. The RRC’s mandate concerns humanitarian assistance and interventions in emergencies and the protection of rights of IDPs, returnees and refugees (RRC 2013).

## 4.2 Methods of Selection

In accordance with the purpose of the study a purposeful sample was selected that involved two sampling levels; sampling of context and of participants. Sampling of the context was done by *typical case sampling* as to select cases that exemplify a dimension of interest (Bryman 2012: 419). The dimension of interest for this study are the contexts where return is experienced by most of the returnees in NBeG – in returnee settlement areas, and the more urban centres. For the sampling of participants *criterion sampling* was applied so that individuals that were chosen shared three common criteria according to the study purpose: age, duration since arrival and having spent most or all their lives in exile. Everyone who met the above mentioned criteria<sup>11</sup> and who was willing to participate was included in the study. There were no obstacles to an efficient recruitment and no person dropped out of the study. The number of study participants was determined during the data collection process and followed the principle of saturation (Mason 2010).

## 4.3 Presentation of the Primary Sources

Two main locations were chosen for data collection. On the one hand, *Aweil* which is the state capital of NBeG. Within Aweil town interviews were carried out in a market area, in areas where both, returnees and stayees live side by side (Naivasha and Maper) and an exclusive returnee settlement (New Apada). On the the other hand, data was collected in Aweil East county. More precisely, returnee settlement areas (Manyiel, Kanajak, Bout Yar) were chosen that centred around *Wanjok*, a rural centre of the Aweil East<sup>12</sup>.

The data collection resulted in the recording and verbatim transcription of 26 interviews of which 13 were female and 13 male participants. All women regardless of their age were mothers of at least one child and had up to six children with more advanced age. Men were either married to mostly one wife or unmarried. Thus, their marital status was consistent with what is perceived the norm among the Dinka people to which all respondents belonged to. Most of respondents had returned from Khartoum and a few from Darfur. Thereby, almost all participants had returned together with other family members. Study participants included both, assisted and spontaneous returnees.<sup>13</sup> Because study participants were recruited by walking through returnee areas and markets, interviews took place right away at a relatively quiet place and after informed consent had been reached.

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<sup>11</sup> However, to likewise embrace different ages and the two genders it was paid attention to relatively evenly distributed gender and ages among the group of study participants.

<sup>12</sup> See for the data collection locations *Appendix 8.5 Data Collection Locations*.

<sup>13</sup> See for details on respondents *Appendix 8.6 Study Participants*.

The duration of interviews was between 25 to 49 minutes. While the duration was mainly determined by the respondent's talkativeness it was also influenced by the goings-on around and other duties and activities of respondents. It is this limited duration of some of the interviews that led to a relatively high number of interviews as to ensure the richness of the data.

Since those who migrated to the North do not know English interviews were conducted by means of interpretation from English to Dinka, the local language in which all returnees were fluent. With English being the official language in South Sudan only since 2007 the general knowledge of the language was very low making the identification of a suitable interpreter challenging<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4.4 Analysis and Interview Transcription

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and carefully edited where phrases and fragments were difficult to understand due to broken English. The data analysis involved different stages and steps as suggested by Creswell (2007) and by Schweitzer and Steel (2008): The first stage of data analysis approached the data in an idiographic way through analysing each transcript on its own. Themes and concerns the individual participants raised were identified and the key statements and sentences categorised and coded. The second stage looked at the data in a nomothetic way. Thus, codes identified in each interview transcript were compared in their content across the whole group of participants and emergent or subordinate themes among them identified. Additionally, patterns of codes such as their frequency among interviewees were looked for. Then, the emergent themes were translated into a narrative account of respondent's experiences and confirmed through re-reading of the original transcripts. Finally, the findings were confronted with the model of analysis and its theoretical concepts.

#### 4.5 Criticism of the Sources

Statements and comments of those who have been consulted for the study were critically evaluated since repatriation is a politically and emotionally debated issue. The 26 interviewed returnees understandably used the opportunity to voice their concerns about the assistance of international organisations and complaints about the government in their return and did not get tired to point at their miserable situation. Thereby, it sometimes remained unclear whether they talked about their own experiences and situation or talked for the collective of all returnees.

Only few of the key informants were locals themselves shared unbiased insights to experiences with returnees. The others tended to reproduce political statements or as defined by the

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<sup>14</sup> Two young Dinka men (James Kuol and David Luol Deng) from Aweil East, NBeG shared the role as translator for this study. Both completed secondary school in Uganda where they learnt the English language. See for potential biases through interpretation 4.6 Trustworthiness.

approaches of their organisations. Importantly to mention here is that hardly any organisation was running projects that were targeting returnees – but included them as vulnerable persons in projects – and thus only little specific information existed about their situation.

Background information on return in South Sudan and general discussions around return were retrieved from published sources. However, with the debate around repatriation being highly political and being discussed mainly in the context of return management the reports and books used for this study had to be comprehended in this context.

#### 4.6 Trustworthiness

The quality of the data is presumably affected by the fact that both the questions and the answer were translated from English to Dinka language and vice versa. The unfavourable level of the English translation most probably led to inappropriate translations at times. Further bias in the data may have been caused by not ideal interview situations in rather public settings and uneven power relations between researcher and respondents<sup>15</sup>. Regarding the role of the researcher it became obvious that the researcher was clearly perceived as an outsider by the study participants. While this was unavoidable as a white woman from Europe with a very different socio-economic and cultural background it meant that a reflective stance was required regarding own bias and values throughout the research process. The awareness of one's own influence on the study is important as to embrace strategies for improving confirmability of the study results. Because the study was carried out by one single person the study results could not be confirmed by co-researchers. However, thorough peer-reviewing from the beginning to the end of the study allowed for critical inputs on procedures, the set-up of the study and potential bias. The study emphasises moreover transparency in documenting its research procedures and justifying methodological choices to let the reader make his own judgement about the trustworthiness of the study.

Because the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the social reality of those being studied a strategy of respondent validation was applied during the data collection process. This meant that individuals were confronted with primary findings the researcher had arrived at to confirm whether she had understood the social world and the attached meanings of the individuals who had been studied.

#### 4.7 Ethical Considerations

Privacy is essential not only to collect valid data but also to not harm study participants (Bryman 2012: 135; Mack et al. 2005: 11). In practice however, confidentiality turned out to be a

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<sup>15</sup> See for a further discussion on privacy and power-relation 4.7 Ethical Considerations.

challenge and the principle had clearly been relativised by the circumstances in the field. This was due to two reasons: Firstly, the researcher's perception of confidentiality differed considerably from the one of people in the NBeG context. Locals stated repeatedly that "people do not have secrets from each other" and "everyone knows about everyone's situation and hardship". Secondly, the recruitment led to data collection on the spot which often led to friends, relatives, neighbours, customers or children feeling free to join the circle during the interview. It was not understood why listeners could not be present during the interview by the listeners, study participant and the translator alike. However, the following minimum privacy standards were always adhered to: the participants were asked to choose the place for the interview according to where they felt most comfortable to talk and the research assistant (translator) was instructed to the role of confidentiality in research so that he could intervene when from his perspective as a local this was not ensured.

As to avoid deception the purpose of the study was clearly explained to participants before their participation (Bryman 2012: 143). This was also done to ensure that participants do not expect any direct benefits as a result of their participation. This proved especially important in the context of NBeG where foreigners are usually associated with the many development agencies. Hence, it had to be stressed that the research took place independently and was not meant to be need assessment for the visited communities. In this regard, there was a need to clarify that the study is for the sake of creating knowledge about the research topic and not for the direct planning of a new intervention. Even though this was not satisfactory to most of the participants it was still understood that the study was carried out on an independent basis.

Besides the previously discussed outsider role of the researcher the relation between informants and the researcher was clearly determined by power relations reflected in differences of financial means, education and the helplessness of many study participants in their current situation. However, there was no visible discomfort among respondents as they shared openly their experiences which were often marked by hardship and deprivation. Thus, power differentials did not constitute a problem in itself (Scheyvens and Story 2003: 151). Nevertheless, to not reinforce perceived differences and powerlessness considerable time was spent in returnee locations as to listen to other community members as well.

As a fact informants benefit considerably less from field research than those who carry out a study (Scheyvens and Story 2003: 155). This study is not an exemption. Nevertheless, respondents, their relatives and neighbours usually showed great appreciation that their return experiences were of interest and several times interviewees expressed that they felt their voices were being heard for the first time while usually they felt left alone with their situation.

## 5 Analysis

The analysis presents and discusses the findings according to the concepts introduced in the model of analysis: (1) preparedness, (2) social networks and (3) identity.

### 5.1 Preparedness

To become part of a society requires not only the will to do so but certainly the ability to establish oneself in a given context. The returnees' reflections on their return experience suggest that both, their questionable motivation and insufficient readiness have heavily complicated their return process.

#### 5.1.1 Motivation for Return

The distinction between voluntary and forced migration has increasingly been questioned because motivations for migration can vary in their degree of coercion and are often interlinked with incentives for return (Holm Pedersen 2003: 5). Clearly, a combination of factors also influenced the respondents' motivation to return. Thereby, several aspects that had been decisive for their return decision also shaped the return experience in a considerable way.

Returnees lamented that their decision to return had been based on rather vague and unspecific available *information*. Sufficient information about the post-return conditions in the home country allow for the assessing of one's own future prospects in the country of origin and are thus necessary for any return decision (Zimmermann 2012). Other than suggested by Cassarino (2004) technological means of communications could not facilitate the gathering of sufficient information given the limited access to and availability of electronic information. For their return decision the returnees had to rely on a combination of supposedly trustworthy information sources<sup>16</sup> and hearsay among Southerners in the North. This simply had not allowed them to gain a realistic picture on the living circumstance in NBeG but rather reinforced their euphoric expectations about newly independent South Sudan. In fact their return was motivated by the idea to settle in urban centres of the South where their education, work and business experience would allow them to relatively easy find work as day labourers in the expectedly growing industries just as they had experienced in the North. Webber (2011) argues that any return that takes place on the grounds of uncertain information and which is not based on an "exploratory visit" to the home country as to consider the feasibility of return is problematic. Having only had the chance to assess the opportunity structure upon return indeed made them being ill-prepared for their new lives in NBeG as will become clear later in the analysis.

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<sup>16</sup> They considered information as trustworthy that was provided by the radio campaign of the GoSS to motivate Southerners in the North to return, the IOM's awareness campaign about their repatriation programme and the chiefs of the Dinka communities.

The return decision was also influenced by external circumstances which had limited the returnees' *agency in the decision-making* process. All respondents stressed severely increased violence and discrimination towards Southerners – commonly referred to as “being tortured by the Arabs” – after the CPA was signed in 2005 and South Sudan became independent in 2011 as a main reason for return. Concretely, experiences such as having been arrested arbitrarily, harassments on the streets, being treated as inferior, robbery of their property and general negative sentiments in the host society towards them were interpreted as a requesting them to “go back to their own land”. Peter remembered how he experienced daily life in Khartoum while comparing to his situation now in NBeG:

*“We were having some crisis in Khartoum; there you can walk while you are worrying, you can eat when you are worrying so it can make your life to be hard. Because when you walk and eat while you are having fear it is very bad. But here now we are staying free, we don't fear and we don't run so we just stay here without these problems.”*

Thus, based on a life in fear returnees returned because they felt they had to save their lives and had no plausible alternative (Ruben et al. 2009). However, not all respondents assessed their situation as severe. They would have opted for remaining in the North if the mass leaving had not put them under pressure to return as well. Some of the younger respondents felt also they were pushed to return out of obligation to respect elder family members and to adhere to their return decision.

As suggested by Cassarino (2008) lacking freedom to choose to return can have severe implications for reintegration. Once arrived in NBeG and confronted with the actual situation most respondents felt it had been a wrong decision to return. Moreover, they realised that it was impossible to reverse their decision due to the closed border between Sudan and South Sudan and a deteriorating security situation in the border region. Confronted with the fact that they had become permanent returnees against their will the young men and women reacted by blaming the GoSS and people in the North that had given them inaccurate information by “telling stories” (Teresa). In fact, relatively recently arrived returnees expressed the feeling of having been fooled to return to a context that had not much to offer to them. However, with time proceeding returnees seemed to have recovered from the initial shock at arrival. Having been able to survive in spite of the challenging environment of NBeG returnees became aware of major improvements in their lives since return – the gaining of security and freedom. Both had prompted their initial motivation for return. Diing reflected:

*“Even if we cannot get anything here we shall not cry because it is good to be back to your land where you sleep in peace every night”*

Even though the young adults had spent most or all their lives in the North they had never forgotten the reasons for being in exile. They had longed for the time to return and with the long-awaited peace and independence there was not much that kept them in the North. While discussed later on it needs to be mentioned here that their deep attachment to the land of origin and the subsequent feeling of belonging to the South seem to have allayed any concerns about their future prospects in their place of origin. Again, their motivation for return was based on expectations that could not be met and prevented them from preparing for suitable livelihood strategies.

### 5.1.2 Readiness to Return

Returnees' extent of preparedness was mainly influenced by their ability to mobilise the necessary resources. With regards to *intangible resources* returnees realised that their work experience was to no advantage in the rural setting of NBeG where the population was widely practicing subsistence farming. With no industrial and few rural centres the returnees' skills were hardly applicable. The few occasions arose literally when NGO or UN organisations were employing them for construction projects. Besides the unexpected unfavourable opportunity structures the use of work experience and skills was also considerably constrained by local power structures (Cassarino 2004: 259). For instance they could not get any of the highly desired positions within the government administration and felt "not being considered" because they had been in the North and did not know the right persons for the right situations. In fact they lacked the necessary social relations that would have allowed them to apply their available know-how.

Thus, the young returning men had to turn to rather provisional sources of income such as selling firewood, a business with fierce competition due to the large number of returnees. Female returnees tried to become tea sellers a new but popular business in NBeG that only allowed a few to build a livelihood based on it. Out of lacking alternatives the selling of tea had become highly competitive and many female respondents were desperately looking out for occasional jobs such as helping stayees with their harvest, selling grinded groundnuts for them in the markets or even water from the boreholes around. Just as suggested by King (1986) a long period of absence had alienated returning migrants from the society of origin. This led to a return process of the young adults that was considerably shaped by rethinking their own future prospects in their country of origin and reorienting themselves in this given life situation. Returnees recognised that they would have to start cultivation in the long term. The acquiring of these new skills as well as the necessary tools considerably complicated their building of a livelihood and left many returnees and their relatives in a vulnerable situation.



Major challenges also arose in regards to the mobilisation of *tangible resources*. After an absence between 15 and 25 years returnees did not possess property and land to which they could have returned to as it had mostly been occupied in the meantime. Geng described the returnees' situation as follows:

*"Here in South Sudan you can only be in a good life when you have your own land to grow sorghum and if you have goats and cows. But that time before we left from here we [my family] were having these things. But then the Arabs came to fight us and they collected the cows and goats and burned down our sorghum and houses. That's why we ran away and now we are back and have nothing".*

Pantuliano (2007; 2009) has argued that land issues are central to reintegration in rural and urban areas of South Sudan. Without land for cultivation and cattle as financial security returnees attempted to get small incomes through occasional jobs and establishing a livelihood by building up small businesses as already mentioned above. However, building up a business in NBeG has been experienced as extremely difficult by the study participants due to the hardly obtainable or expensive inputs in the economically isolated region of NBeG. Thereby, lacking awareness about the economic context of NBeG could only partly explain why they had not brought the necessary tools and utensils to implement their business ideas.

According to Cassarino (2004) the best prepared returnees are those who return autonomously because they only return when they have gathered sufficient resources to secure their return and to carry out their projects upon return (274). Indeed, those who returned by their own means tended to be in a more favourable situation than those who returned with assistance. A few had returned before their family members and could organise that they followed later with essential materials and utensils. Arriving with utensils such as pots, tea glasses and chairs indeed turned out to be crucial as it allowed them to relatively straightforwardly start selling tea in the markets. However, not everyone was lucky enough to arrive with all their belongings due to lootings during their journey.

On the other hand, those who benefited from return assistance per se possessed limited resources. Additionally, they could only bring a limited amount of baggage and often parts of it had got spoilt during the journey or the extended stopovers in transit camps. Moreover, assisted returnees underestimated the importance of mobilising their resources as they trusted that the GoSS and IOM would support them sufficiently upon return since they were motivating and organising large scale return to South Sudan. As a result of this misinterpretation assisted returnees had to sell off most of their belongings upon arrival as to survive. This put them in a very critical situation similar to the IDPs in NBeG that had been displaced by seasonal floods and remained without shelter and other essentials.

As a result of their limited ability to mobilise tangible and intangible resources, returnees not only struggled to become agents of change in regards to their own unfortunate situation but also in regards to having any innovative influence on the opportunity structures in the region that in turn would have improved the situation of many returnees. Disillusion was especially widespread among those who returned from a relatively successful life in the North and with the motivation to contribute to the development in their home country. According to Cassarino (2004) such situations, if remaining unchanged, are likely to lead to remigration.

Quite clearly, access to existing social networks in the place of return would have prevented them from getting into such an invidious situation. Social capital provided by family for instance pertains to the resources returnees can benefit and rely on for establishing themselves in a unfamiliar environment (Cassarino 2004: 266). These issues are discussed in the following section.

## 5.2 Social Networks

Social networks have played a crucial role in the return process of the young men and women – either because they have functioned as a source of support or conversely because they were not intact and complicated the living circumstances of returnees. The following social networks have shaped the returnees' return experiences: (1) relatives, (2) community, (3) NGOs and UN organisations (5) the government.

### 5.2.1 Relatives

While returning with *family* members was common to most returnees it also meant an additional burden for many of the young returning men due to their felt obligation to “support everybody”. The young men felt they not only had to take care of their own children and wife but also of younger brothers and sisters or of their parents. They were often desperate to provide even food and housing for them. Due to felt pressure to attend to these duties those who had already been able to build a livelihood faced major constraints in saving or investing money in any way but rather lived from hand to mouth. Not only had they get used to a living situation that was characterised by less economic wealth compared to their previous lives in the North but also to a loss of their independence in leading their own life. James explained:

*“What makes my life very difficult is my mother because I do not only have to look for something to eat for myself and for her but I can't do what I want like buying cloths because everyone is waiting for me to give some money to her.”*

Some females that arrived separately from their husbands and had no kin they could have fallen back to felt a similar burden by having children they had to look after instead of pursuing any

income generating activities. 21-year old Abuk, a woman with two small children and being the second wife to her husband who chose to stay with his first wife in Juba said:

*“When you can expect a good life is when your husband is coming and visiting you and then gives some support or he sends you and your children some money. From there maybe you can have the spirit to think positive about the future.”*

For Abuk and other returnees that had returned on their own family networks nevertheless played an important role. Some study participants stated that they maintained relations with family members that had remained in the North and would receive remittances in the form of air time on their mobile phones that then could be sold. As the only source of income this financial support was certainly crucial in their economic situation but hardly sustainable. While remittances may remain important for these returnees' livelihoods the more interesting question concerns the role of transnational networks returnees seem to establish between their home and the former host country. Transnational networks have been found to facilitate transnational livelihoods of migrants and their families by travelling back and forth between home and host country for doing business, relating to people and broadening one's opportunities (De Haas 2005). In fact, transnationalism has challenged models of integration by blurring dichotomies such as “origin” and “destination” and categories like “permanent” and “temporary” and “return” (De Haas 2008: 38). However, the still very limited access to technical means of communication, the presently closed border and general arduous travel circumstances between the North and the South may limit the benefits of these networks for the close future. However, with improvement of any of the before mentioned factors the returnees will be able to make use of these links and extend the benefits of their transnational network beyond the receipt of remittances – an intention that several returnees expressed when envisioning their future. This would further support the argument that reintegration does not necessarily implicate a permanent return nor that remigration does imply a failed return (Jeffery and Murison 2011).

The young men and women decided to remain in the transit camps or to settle in urban areas of Aweil town and rural centres in Aweil East county where they hoped to find work, services and schools for their children. Malik (2009) suggests that returning refugees increasingly choose to return to urban areas because they had been urbanised during exile and would find it difficult to reintegrate in their rural communities of origin. The majority of respondents were indeed used to an urban lifestyle due to their stay in the suburbs of Khartoum. However, despite the lacking opportunities for the masses of returning persons from the North and unsolved land issues in the returnee areas returnees chose to stay in these areas. While most returnees knew of relatives in the region, lost connections and poor transportation in NBeG certainly complicated reunification. Nevertheless, it turned out that returnees themselves barely made an effort to do

so. Van Hear and Nyberg Sørensen (2003: 28) suggest that the return of a family member can lead to additional hardship to the receiving families in post-conflict settings if return leads to the absence of remittances and the loss of an income source. However, an additional burden may not only arise in such a case but also when returning family members had not remitted money as in the case of the respondents. In fact, the respondents realised that the food insecure situation of many households in NBeG hardly allowed for supporting returnees. Additionally, they felt not entitled to seek their material support because they had been living a relatively prosperous life during exile compared to the ones full of deprivation of their relatives in NBeG. As Davids and van Houte (2008) argue such feelings of failure and shame towards family and friends can prevent returnees from re-establishing their social relations. Returnees expressed their discomfort by finding various reasons why they could not meet their relatives such as being not sure where they lived, not being used to the village life in NBeG, not being tolerated at their homes and even questioning their readiness to help them such as assumed by Garang:

*“Another problem is that I have a lot of relatives here but they don’t come to welcome us and I cannot go there and tell them that me and my mother are hungry and that we have nothing to eat [...] they can say that I only came back from Khartoum to get married that we are looking for cows [...] so we better just stay here.”*

### 5.2.2 Community

In regards to the *stayee communities* in their settlement areas returnees expressed that despite the solving of issues around access to resources such as land and water returnee-stayee relations had remained rather loose. This was however not as much the case in mixed settlement areas as in exclusive returnee settlement areas. Abuk Atoc who lived in a latter one explained:

*“These people around here they do not really need those who are coming back, they don’t need a poor person [...] they think I will just beg them for help and that we can’t return a favour. That’s the experience people have with us.”*

Obviously, the stayees did not trust the returnees could reciprocate a favour. According to Coleman (1990) trustworthiness is based on a certain closeness of social relationships that allow sanctioning in case of unmet obligations. Additionally, trustworthiness depends on the amount of outstanding obligations, the specific need for help, availability of other sources for support and the general level of wealth of a society. The returnee-stayee relation can be seen in this regard; stayees were also struggling in post-conflict NBeG and short of all sorts of resources while having experienced many unreturned favours by returnees. Their need for support undoubted, the fact that returnees received humanitarian assistance may caused this rather hesitant attitude of the stayee communities towards the returnees. However, returnees

interpreted the stayees' reservation as greed and as "not having a culture of helping a person even if you don't know him" (Flora). Some recent returned women also came to the conclusion that stayee women were only interested to meet them as long as they had cloths and other things they had brought from the North and which they had to sell. As a result of this perception about the stayee community returnees hesitated to interact with the stayee communities what reinforced the existing distance between them.

The *returnee communities* on the other hand constituted a close-knit community based on the shared experience and where everyone knew about everyone's situation. These communities can be characterised as a dense and intimate networks with shared interests among its members and of reciprocal relations that facilitate the mobilisation of resources and the protecting or pooling of existing ones (Lin 2001). Hence, the returnee community itself was for most returnees the first and most important point of support. The returnee community played an important base for mutual psychological support in their difficult situation. More precisely, the young men and women turned to new made friendships to other young returning adults for coping with their discouragement about their miserable situation. This was especially important for those young men and women who blamed their parents for having made them return. Also, none of the returnees could fall back on old friendships either because they returned to different areas in South Sudan or had remained in the North.

The economic values of engaging in the returnee community was obviously rather limited due to the few available resources. However, respondents named other returnees that had arrived before them as important informants about the challenges and opportunities in their settlement region. Information provides the basis for any action and is relatively easily obtainable through social relations (Coleman 1990). Given the restricted access to other networks the returnee community often served as only source of information. In a context where information is mainly shared informally relying on one source can be problematic. For instance, returnees were mainly informed about how to access humanitarian assistance by word of mouth which led to confusion about the extent and duration of support and high expectations that could not be met by the assistance providers.

### **5.2.3 International Organisations and the GoSS**

Given the above outlined rather limited support from relatives and communities returnees valued the assistance that addressed immediate humanitarian needs through material assistance, food aid and health service as essential in a situation where they had no shelter and food, children which had fallen sick in the unfamiliar environment or which were still weak from the long journey. Nevertheless, assistance was criticised in several regards adding to the critical voices about the effectiveness of return assistance. Firstly, inaccessibility of assistance was

mainly mentioned in relation to the receipt of food aid that had to be collected in distant places for which they lacked transportation. Where they could receive assistance distribution practices were perceived unequal with the same amounts given to each household regardless of the number of people constituting it. Also, corruption was perceived as a major problem in the sense that local employees of the food distributing organisations were said to defraud the food for their own families. Secondly, Chimni's (2004) criticism about the usually short-term nature of assistance, its focus on material needs and its marginal extent was just as well experienced as problematic by the respondents. Not only was assistance widely perceived as a drop in the ocean, but returnees also had expected that they would receive extended food support and assistance with building up their livelihood upon return. Food aid was received for three months a period that was too short for most returnees to find income generating activities in the meantime that could support them and their family not to speak of the time it takes to harvest for those who started cultivating. Expectations regarding livelihood support was based on their awareness about the wide presence of the international community in South Sudan and experiencing how large scale return was managed. More precisely, the receipt of humanitarian assistance in the various transit camps during their journey had let them assume that assistance would continue to a similar extent upon return. Assisted returnees were furthermore of the opinion that it is the obligation of the organisations to take care of them since they had brought them to NBeG. The case of the young returnees in NBeG is thus also an example of Hammond's (1999) criticism that assistance tends to end at the point of repatriation. That is because assistance is seldom based on the concerns of the returning individuals but rather on the assumption that return is a simple "homecoming". This clearly is reflected in the assumption of the humanitarian community that returnees would return to their villages of origin and reunite with their relatives who then could facilitate their return process.

As stressed by Black and Gent (2006) this kind of return assistance may also do little to solve the issues that arise when people return to post-conflict contexts. Respondents stressed not having access to land or rights to the land they stayed on as the main challenge to building up a livelihood. Thereby, they were aware that this was not the responsibilities of the organisations but of their own *government*. However, returnees did not expect much from the weak and institutionally still malfunctioning government. Thus, Deng Geng and many other respondents did not have much confidence in the authorities and their ability to allocate them a plot of land soon.

*"It was them who took us here to Maper and that said we can live here. But until now the land has still not been surveyed. Maybe we will be chased away."*

This led to disappointment in the government and to a perception that the government was not interested in them even though it had campaigned for their return. Frustration was also expressed in regards to corruption which they had not expected in the newly independent country and which they perceived as a major cause for not having equal access to resources, services and opportunities. While these concerns were mainly voiced by recently returned and assisted returnees the perceptions of the spontaneous returned young men and women were much more tolerant towards the government's failures. Many trusted that with patience they would soon experience progress in the region. Clearly, in their difficult situation this hope was the only reason to stay confident about the future. Marco expressed his optimism in the following way:

*"[...] our government is still young; it's like a new born baby that has not power to do anything. But maybe in some years to come things will get better and then everything will be in right place. This is why we send our children to the schools so they can help develop the place."*

In this regard, it was also self-evident for the respondents that they needed to be part of any development effort and interpreted it as their obligation as the people of the new-born country to remain patient with the government rather than to expect support from it during this critical phase of establishing themselves.

### 5.3 Identity

How the closed social networks – relatives and community – opened up to the returnees and what new social networks they could establish was not a question of trustworthiness and reciprocity only, but also mainly a question of the social circles that they came to interact within based on their identity. Accordingly, identity determined the accessibility to resources shortly after return (Davids and van Houte 2008). Beyond that, how the high number of people that had been socialised outside of the society in NBeG was received was a matter of identity and crucial for their return process. Thereby, two aspects need consideration; how the exile experience had formed the returnees' identity and how return challenged these identities through both, their own perceptions and the perceptions of them by the individuals of the home society.

#### 5.3.1 Identity Formation during Exile

The returnees claimed that they had remained true Dinka people despite having lived a very different lifestyle in the North. Amou outlined:

*"In Khartoum we used to follow our culture and speak our language [...] and we thought our children. When we came back we have seen the people here are still using our culture and*

*ourselves we learned also about the dancing and the night drums here. So now everyone is following the same culture from here now."*

Spending a considerable part of one's life in exile suggests that the identity formation of the young men and women had been significantly influenced by the cultural context of the host society (Malkki 1995; Holm Pedersen 2003; Ruben et al. 2009). Yet, the returnees expressed strong feelings of belonging towards their place of origin, which is not a contradiction to this argument. Rather it suggests that the exile experience had shaped their identity in a way that led to stronger feelings of belonging towards the place of origin than to the host society. Two main factors can explain their strong identification with their place of origin.

On the one hand, motivations for migration such as memories of traumatic experiences or distrust towards other social, religious or ethnic groups due to past events influence feelings of "home" (van Houte and de Koning 2008: 10). In this regard, a very strong historical awareness about the long-lasting conflict that had antagonised the people of the South and those of the North was obviously embodied by all the returnees. Thereby, based on the history of struggling against imposed Arabisation<sup>17</sup> by the Northern rulers on the South had made the Dinkas in the North adhere to their culture in the sense of an affair of honour. Moreover, they had been aware that it had been violence that had made their parents flee to the North which in fact was considered hostile environment. Mary like other interviewees, expressed that they had been forced to live "*on the territory of Arabs*<sup>18</sup>," meaning that they had always felt to have lived among their predators during their time in exile. While this had prevented them from feeling at home in the North they also had longed to return to the place of their ancestors and where their own children should grow up. Ancestors play an important role in the Dinka culture that values the land of the ancestors through different rituals (Deng 1998). Without exception all returnees mentioned such deep attachment to their land and the importance to have returned to it.

On the other hand, many seemed to have preserved their identity due to the specific circumstances of exile. In exile, the everyday circumstances and the social interactions of a migrant in a particular social setting continuously determine a migrant's identity. Thereby, how the individual interprets his place in this particular social environment constructs perceptions of inclusion and exclusion and determine feelings of belonging (Marshall and Foster 2002: 66; Holm Pedersen 2003: 44). While some stayed in places where hardly any other Dinkas lived most of the young adults had grown up and been socialised in Dinka communities in the cities of

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<sup>17</sup> Arabisation refers to the gradual spreading of Arab identity and the Arab language which after decolonization in the 1950s was official policy as to propagate the Arab identity throughout the territory of Sudan. Arabisation was often accompanied by an ideology of Arab supremacy shaping the non-Arab or African identity of the people of the South (Sharkey 2008: 21).

<sup>18</sup> This notion for the people of the North is widely used by Southerners and carries negative connotations originating in the long and conflict-ridden history between the South and the North.



the North. There they had not only learnt and used the language of their parents but also tribal structures of chieftainship which had been maintained among them and customs which had been kept alive. Common to all of the returnees regardless of their settlement situation in the North was the shared experience of insecurity and discrimination against them which had undoubtedly created feelings of exclusion from the host society and feelings of inclusion towards the Dinka communities.

### 5.3.2 Perceptions of Identity upon Return

The view they had maintained and constructed about themselves during exile got challenged upon return. Ghanem (2003) argues that interaction in new social contexts and within historical moments leads to the changing view of oneself and the other through the acquiring of new meanings. The returnees' reflections in this regard indicated that returning to a social context that hardly corresponded to their idealised expectations of it was not an easy process.

Because recently arrived returnees only interacted in a limited way with the stayee communities their perception of them depended more on observations than on experiences. However, they realised what they thought were shared values and views with the Dinka in NBeG turned out to be an identity that had been influenced through the exile experience in several ways. As Ghorashi (2001) had also observed in other contexts, upon return, the in exile acquired identity did no longer fit with the society of origin which in the meantime had undergone changes as well.

Changed attitudes were apparent for instance regarding the perceived value of cattle. Especially cows lie at the very centre of the Dinka identity representing not only socio-economic status but also provide the foundation of the family and continuation of lineage through the payment of bride wealth (Deng 1998: 104). Other than the general perception among the Dinkas of NBeG some returnees indicated that they viewed the possession of a large herd of cows not as highly desirable and that they would rather invest their savings in a business idea than in cattle. Also, some of the young men criticised the lifestyle of Dinka men in NBeG that spent the day in the market for chatting and playing games. James explained that in the North one had to work hard to make a living and educate oneself at the same time which for many meant working during the day and going to schools in the evening. Thus, he concluded:

*“There in Khartoum no one likes to stay idly, sitting like this is not good, it cannot give you anything [...] that’s why I hope the government and the organisations will build many schools because the people here are still backward, so people can be like in other countries.”*

These confrontations with the own identity seemed to have complicated the process of creating feelings of belonging towards the own society of origin considerably. However, more importantly for the question of belonging was probably how returnees perceived the stayees' attitude

towards them. The respondents' elaboration on this suggested a rather ambiguous picture: some stressed that they felt welcomed by the communities owing to ceremonies and spontaneous celebrations when they had arrived by bus or train with other assisted returnees. Returnees also trusted that the stayees would be on their side or assist them whenever one of them would be in any kind of trouble. Most returnees however, expressed feelings of exclusion. Some young men and women mentioned language barriers as they mixed Arabic with Dinka or were even more fluent in Arabic. They not only encountered communication problems but also little tolerance towards them. Obviously, stayees interpreted the use of Arabic among some returnees as a sign for their Arabisation while in the North and feared such an influence on the society of NBeG.

Another major issue linked to this centred on what returnees perceived as lacking readiness of the stayee communities to share resources with them. Manut outlined:

*"They say that this is their land. These people here have another mentality they think jealously. They do not want to give us land because we were in Khartoum while they were here during the war. They say that they were killed by the Arabs while we were just there in Khartoum not doing anything for this land. "*

Davids and van Houte (2008) suggest that how returnees are received by those who had stayed behind can be affected by viewing them as betrayers who had not remained in the country during conflict. Or they can be regarded with a mix of distrust and misunderstanding because they do not fulfil expectations of benefitting the community when coming back. The respondents argued that the stayees viewed them as beneficiaries of a peaceful and independent South Sudan without any effort on their part. Even more they had stayed in the hated North where they were believed to have spent a relatively pleasant life while yet they returned *"with empty hands"* (Elisa) while in need for access to the scarce resources.

Thus, returnees were confronted with a new returnee identity that was connected to how they had been labelled by the stayees and their expectations towards them. Davids and van Houte (2008) describe the negotiation of these images as a difficult process and the recently returned respondents certainly were at the very beginning of it. This was for instances indicated by how most of them rejected their labelling as "returnees". Being a returnee was understood as being different and not having become part of the society yet. They associated the notion of returnee with differences in wealth compared to the stayee communities and facing limitations to one's agency. Rosa said in this regard:

*"I see myself different from the people here because they have land, cows and goats and they can work with it. But I'm not on the same level – I have nothing. I am still a returnee. But*

*when I will start to operate a business I can pay school fees for my children and buy them cloths and maybe I can even buy a plot of land. So then I will be the same than these people.”*

Unsurprisingly, this also shows that economic resources stand at the very beginning of constructing feelings of being home. Hammond (2004) explained how a new place initially becomes home is a process that starts with securing a livelihood and creating daily routines and later also involves belonging to a social setting and other forms of attachment to that place. Worth noting here is that returnees compared their situations not to the ones of stayees which faced many of the same challenges as their daily reality too but had incorporated them in their way of living. Returnees however, had their previous lives in the North in mind and were distressed about the deprivation they had to endure and felt uncomfortable to have arrived to a context where they did not know how things work. Holm Pedersen (2003) suggests in this regard that reintegration and return experiences to the society of origin are negotiated through continuously comparing with the experiences in exile. Most returnees expressed the idea of being like visitors to their own land. This indicated that they obviously had not yet managed to build a connection to the society of NBeG but rather felt in-between (Ghorashi 2001: 119) their lives in exile and their new lives in NBeG. Thus, they were far from being able to fully participate in society.

## 6 Conclusion

The study was set out to contribute to the small body of knowledge on sustainable return that has included perspectives of actual returnees. More specifically, it attempted to challenge existing conceptions of sustainable return in post-conflict contexts. In order to do so the study aimed at understanding what factors and circumstances influence the individual return process of young adults to NBeG, South Sudan. South Sudan has experienced a mass influx of returning people since peace has been restored. Among the returning population are many young adults that have returned with high expectations about their future lives in their home country. How these persons reintegrate is an issue that should not be underestimated given their sheer number. Yet, deprivation and disappointment has been widespread among them. While little is known about the return processes in post-conflict settings questions around sustainable return have mostly been looked from a limited to socio-economic perspective.

Regarding the question *what factors and circumstances young adults experience as central to their recent return* to NBeG the returnees' preparedness, social networks and identity were found to have determined their return process. The implications of the returnees' preparedness were mainly of economic nature. Return was highly motivated by expectations that based on inaccurate information and collective feelings of euphoria about peace and independence of the

South. Returnees had overestimated the opportunities in NBeG and found themselves in an environment where they hardly could apply any of their skills or building up businesses. Instead, they were forced to pursue cultivation for their livelihood. Shock and the inability to cope with the situation hampered the establishing of a livelihood even months and years after arrival. Constraints to access existing social networks did their part to that. Especially, family and stayee communities were hardly supportive due to lacking reciprocity and trustworthiness, as well as preconceptions about each other. Thus, neither family reunification nor integration into the existing communities was part of most study participant's return process. Main source of support were returnees among themselves even though restricted to psychological support and the sharing of information given the few available resources among them. Official assistance only had a low impact on the return process due to its short-term nature and limited extent. Besides limited support returnees faces also major constraints to their agency for instance not having access to land for cultivation. Nevertheless, these negative experiences upon return were complemented by gratitude to have returned to the homeland. This is not contradicting but supportive of the idea that identity and belonging are a major part of return. In fact, returnees were still in the beginning of finding their place in society and both, the competing for resources with stayees and preconceptions about each other played an important role. Thus, in addition to the difficulties around establishing a livelihood returnees entered into a process of negotiating their own identity. To sum up, return is shaped by returnees' preparedness, their access to social networks and questions of identity – three concepts that are highly interrelated and shaped by pre-return experiences and the particular context in which return takes place.

This leads on to the question on *how these individual experiences can challenge the conceptualisation of sustainable return in post-conflict settings*. The conventional understanding of sustainable return reflects a top-down perspective that understands reintegration as successful when an individual has adapted to a given context and when certain socio-economic living conditions are achieved. Even more, it has been suggested that the sustainability of return may be measurable. This study has demonstrated that return is not a one-dimensional process that either ends in an objectively identifiable success or failure. Instead returning is more about participation in the home society and developing feelings of belonging. In fact, whether return had been successful depends on the respective perception of the concerned individual. Return is far from straight forward but is shaped by a multitude of in factors and circumstances that need consideration. In this sense, the ability to build up a livelihood is not what makes a sustainable reintegration. Rather it can be seen as the first step towards it. Hence, beyond establishing oneself economically other challenges are to be met by returning migrants. While economic reintegration goes hand in hand with becoming part of social networks, the opening up of others depends on how returning individuals are perceived by those who had stayed behind. Thus,

individuals do not simply return home and feelings of belonging do not just depend on how well returnees get accustomed to the home society. Instead returnees arrive to a context that has also changed. When reality collides with their romanticised memories, perceptions, attitudes and values need to be re-negotiated. This suggests also that return is not a one way road that each returnee has to go by him or herself. On the contrary, reintegration includes both sides, the one of returnees and of stayees. Especially after conflict, is central how a wider circle of people responds to those who have returned. For example how issues around the access to resources and services are dealt with on a wider societal or political level influences whether returnees feel accepted being back. On a more practical instance it may create opportunities for returnees and prevents them from becoming an additional burden for the war-affected society. In conclusion, the study has highlighted that a more evidence-based conceptualisation of sustainable return needs to understand return as a multidimensional construct. In this sense sustainable return is not something that can be achieved when certain conditions are given. Rather it is a process of finding and negotiating one's own positions within society. Preparedness, social networks and identity can add to such an understanding as they allow for a more holistic view of the return processes. Thereby, each concept encourages looking at return from another angle while still understanding them as interrelated. Thus, the study has added to recent research that has approached sustainable return from more complex questions such as belonging and becoming embedded in society (HolmPedersen 2003; Davids and van Houte 2008; Ruben et al. 2009).

While this study has focused on return on the individual level, its findings suggest that repatriation policies at least in the particular context of South Sudan need to be questioned in two regards. On the one hand, repatriation from Sudan to South Sudan centres mainly on the organising and managing of mass return from one country to the other – an undoubtedly difficult and challenging undertaking. Nevertheless, limiting assistance to transportation and humanitarian assistance upon return suggests that repatriation policies are still based on the assumptions that return is a simple home-coming where reintegration is facilitated by relatives and the receiving community. That returnees would remain at the places they had been “dropped off” was clearly not anticipated. Thus, the international community and the GoSS were not prepared to address the unexpected challenges around access to land and the inability of returnees to build up a livelihood. Speaking of mass return, it has been hardly feasible to address the humanitarian needs that have resulted out of this. On the other hand, return took place based on information that had led to high expectations not only towards assistance itself but also on their future prospects in NBeG in general. It has simply not been taken into account that most of the returnees did not know about life in NBeG since they had grown up in the North. Undeniably, information had been crucial for the return decision and for how prepared returnees arrived.

Thus, based on these findings it can be argued that more need-based repatriation programmes and better awareness campaigns could affect the individual return process noticeably.

Given the little knowledge about reintegration after conflict and the multifaceted nature of it there is need for further research on the subject. As suggested by this study individual return is considerably shaped by those who receive them. Thus, exploring questions on return from the perspectives of the receiving communities and families may add yet another dimension to the concept of sustainable return. Also, to understand mass return to South Sudan better other regions of the country need to be considered. While other regions have received less returnees other circumstances may shape return significantly such as ethnic clashes or urbanisation. Whatever direction further research may take; the complexities of individual reintegration can only be understood when the voices of those who are affected by return are included.

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## 8 Appendix

### 8.1 Terminology

#### **Dinka**

The Dinka are a branch of Nilots and the largest ethnic group in South Sudan. Numbering about 2.5 to 3 Million people consisting of more than 25 sections they cover wide areas of savannah grassland in the Upper Nile region to the flood plains around the White Nile River and to the ironstone plateau of Bahr el-Ghazal. Known as Dinka for centuries they call themselves *jieng* (Upper Nile) or *muonyjang* (Bahr el-Ghazal) (Gurtong 2013; Wyda 2013). The Dinka practice an agro-pastoral lifestyle with subsistence agriculture as major part of their livelihood and cattle rearing (mainly cows) representing social status and wealth providing for a dowry for marriage. While their life and culture is dominated by cattle, their land has intrinsic value not only because of the dependency on it for cultivation and grazing but because it is associated with the ancestors (Deng 1998:103-104; Beswick 2004:93-94).

#### **Durable Solution**

Finding durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) is a political aim with the goal to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. UNHCR promotes three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement (UNHCR 2011).

#### **Forced Migration**

Forced migration includes migration of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people (IDP) and of development-induced displaced. Forced migration can be caused by human rights violations, armed conflict, economic marginalisation and poverty, environmental degradation, population pressures and poor governance. Thereby, causes often overlap or reinforce each other. Forced migrants are often difficult to distinguish from other groups “on the move” and are therefore mostly part of so called mixed migration flows (Holm Pedersen 2003; Feller 2005: 27).

#### **North**

The “North” is a widely used terminology by the people of South Sudan and refers to what before independence of South Sudan was the northern part of Sudan and today is the territory of the Republic of Sudan.

**Repatriation**

Repatriation is a political process that effectually restores refugees' political, economic, social and cultural rights. While it is sometimes simply referred to as "return" it more than just the physical return to a territory, it is also a return to citizenship (Long 2009: 3).

**Return**

Return is the dynamic process of going back (or going for the first time) to the country of origin. There are two types of return: Firstly, return that is "*organised*" or "*assisted*". Return is arranged by IOM and the GoSS/GoS which provide transportation and assist with meeting basic needs during transit. Only individuals that are considered vulnerable such as households with pregnant women, elderly, disabled persons or those that lack the means to return by themselves receive assistance. Only individuals that are considered vulnerable such as households with pregnant women, elderly, disabled persons or those that lack the means to return by themselves receive assistance. Secondly, "*spontaneous*" or "*autonomous*" return where the returning people have organised their own transportation by their own means (Bailey and Harragin 2009: 11).

**Returnee**

A returnee is a person who migrated to another country and stayed there for an extended period of time and recently returned to his or her country of origin. The study also refers to persons as returnees that were born outside of their country of origin and came back to their country of origin.

**Voluntary Repatriation**

Repatriation is voluntary when "after reviewing all available information about the conditions in their country of origin, refugees decide freely to return home. Thus, the decision to repatriate is based on a free and informed choice" (Dimitrijevic et al. 2004: 29).

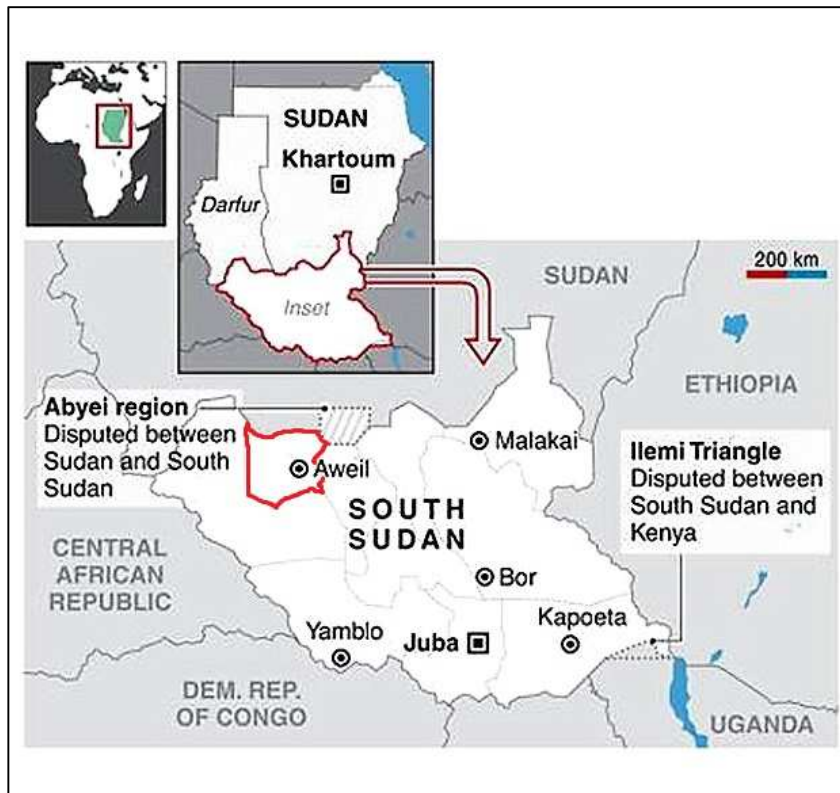
**Stayee**

In contrast to a returnee a stayee is a person that had not migrated but remained in the society where return takes place. In awareness of the fluidity of the categories "returnees" and "stayees" the study refers to stayees as these persons that have not returned to NBeG as part of the mass return after the CPA.

**South**

The "South" is a widely used terminology by the people of South Sudan and refers to the southern part of Sudan before independence and today is the territory of the Republic of South Sudan.

## 8.2 Regional Map



Source : [http://southsudaninfo.net/wp-content/uploads/reference\\_library/maps/new\\_map\\_july9.jpg](http://southsudaninfo.net/wp-content/uploads/reference_library/maps/new_map_july9.jpg)

## 8.3 Interview Guide

Fact Sheet	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Marital Status / Children</li> <li>• Date of Return</li> <li>• Place of Exile</li> <li>• Duration of Absence</li> </ul>

Questions	
Reason for migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When and why did you leave South Sudan?</li> </ul>
Life in Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was your life before you came back?</li> </ul>

Reason for return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you decide to come back?</li> </ul>
Way of return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you come back?</li> </ul>
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you expect before you came back?</li> </ul>
First days in South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the first days in South Sudan and especially in NBeG when you came back.</li> </ul>
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you describe your situation now? How is life in NBeG?</li> </ul>
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel you were prepared for a life here when you came back?</li> </ul>
Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has changed for you?</li> <li>• And how have you changed? Has your stay in Sudan changed you?</li> </ul>
Place of settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do you live and with whom?</li> <li>• Why do you live there?</li> <li>• Do you only stay there or also in another place? Why?</li> <li>• Did you live there before you left?</li> </ul>
Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you make a living?</li> <li>• How do you compare the way you make a living here and in Sudan?</li> </ul>
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel you have any advantages or skills from your experience in Sudan that people who stayed do not have?</li> <li>• How do you use these skills here?</li> </ul>
Life before and now in South Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is life for you in NBeG today compared to back when you left?</li> </ul>
Being a returnee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is it to be a returnee in NBeG?</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you get along with other people here?</li> </ul>
Social network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which people do you trust most here?</li> <li>• From whom do you get support when you are in need?</li> <li>• Your friends, are they returnees or people who stayed?</li> </ul>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel your way of thinking is different from people who stayed here? How?</li> <li>• How is for you to be back in the country you are originally coming from?</li> </ul>
South Sudan- Sudan compared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you like better in Sudan than here?</li> <li>• What do you like better here than in Sudan?</li> </ul>
Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think about your future in South Sudan?</li> </ul>
Feeling about decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel about your decision to come back?</li> </ul>
Connections to Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you imagine going back to Sudan one day?</li> <li>• Who is still there in Sudan?</li> </ul>



## 8.4 Key Informants

Aweil Town					
Date	Location	Institution / Position	Name	Gender	Duration
05.11.2012 (Mon)	Aweil	DRC / Project Manager	Samuel Lual	M	Ca. 45 min
07.11.2012 (Tue)	Aweil	UNHCR / Protection Officer	Syann Williams	F	Ca. 40 min
10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil	Returnee Community / Chief	Deng Dan	M	Ca. 25 min
13.11.2012 (Tue)	Aweil	OCHA / Head of Suboffice	Takesure Mugari	M	Ca. 30 min
16.11.2012 (Fr)	Aweil	NRC / Information Officer	Kur Kur	M	Ca. 30 min

Aweil East County					
Date	Location	Institution	Name of Interviewee	Gender	Duration
19.11.2012 (Mo)	Maluakon	RRC / Director Aweil East	James Mayuen Arol	M	Ca. 45 min
24.11.2012 (Sat)	Bout Yar, AE	Returnee Community / Chief	James Deng Geng	M	Ca. 30 min
.11.2012 (Wed)	Maluakon, AE	IRC / Protection Officer	Peter Athian Dut	M	Ca. 55 min

### 8.5 Data Collection Locations



Source: <http://www.web.net/~cass/images/AweilEast.jpg>

### 8.6 Study Participants

Aweil Town									
Date	Location	Name*	File	Gender	Age*	Martial Status / Children	Return	Duration of Exile in Years*	Duration
08.11.2012 (Wed)	Aweil, Maper	Ayak Abuk Adau	B01	F	28	married / 4	July 2011	25	31:14
08.11.2012 (Th)	Aweil, Maper	Geng Deng Piol	B02	M	29	married / 5	Oct. 2011	20	35:31
08.11.2012 (Th)	Aweil, Maper	Peter Garang Malang	B04	M	27	married / 5	Oct. 2011	18	30:40
08.11.2012 (Th)	Aweil, Maper	Luca Majok Longar	B05	M	18	single / 0	Nov. 2010	12	26:39
09.11.2012 (Fr)	Aweil, Naivasha	Mary Ngor	B06	F	23	married / 4	Jan. 2011	21	25:01
09.11.2012 (Fr)	Aweil, Naivasha	Flora Abuk Atoc	B07	F	23	married / 2	Feb. 2010	23	28:46
09.11.2012 (Fr)	Aweil, Naivasha	Rosa Bol Lual	B09	F	27	married / 4	Jan. 2011	25	33:38
09.11.2012 (Fr)	Aweil, Naivasha	Samuel Riing Dut	B10	M	26	single / 0	April 2011	18	39:15
10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil, New Apada	Ariel Malong Geng	B11	M	27	married / 3	Aug. 2012	15	29:35
10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil, New Apada	Abuk Atoc	B12	F	30	married / 5	Aug. 2012	27	21:39

10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil, New Apada	Abuk Garam Malang	B13+14	F	25	married / 5	Aug. 2012	24	37:12
10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil, New Apada	Maria Ahok Ngong	B15	F	20	married / 1	July 2010	20	24:18
10.11.2012 (Sat)	Aweil, New Apada	James Luol Tong	B16	M	26	married / 1	July 2011	22	31:29
14.11.2012 (Wed)	Aweil, market	Kuol Manot Geng	B17	M	28	married / 1	July 2010	24	34:57
14.11.2012 (Wed)	Aweil, market	Riing Diing Tong	C01	M	18	single / 0	Dec. 2010	18	34:54
14.11.2012 (Wed)	Aweil, market	Deng Geng Athiang	B18	M	29	married / 2	Nov. 2010	22	49:14

\* Names were changed to keep the respondents' anonymity; age and duration are estimated values for some respondents.

Aweil East County									
Date	Location	Name*	File	Gender	Age*	Martial Status / Children	Return	Duration of Exile in Years*	Duration
21.11.2012 (Wed)	Manyiel, AE	Monica Alek Bol	D02	F	18	single / 0	Jan. 2011	18	37:57
21.11.2012 (Wed)	Manyiel, AE	Peter Deng Athiang	E02	M	26	single / 0	Dec. 2011	24	28:56
21.11.2012 (Wed)	Manyiel, AE	Marco Deng Malong	D02	M	24	married / 1	March 2012	24	39:17
21.11.2012 (Wed)	Manyiel, AE	Abuk Lino Ngor	D03	F	21	married / 2	May 2011	21	23:25
22.11.2012 (Thu)	Kanajak, AE	Manut Kur Kur	D04	M	20	single / 0	March 2010	19	44:27
22.11.2012 (Thu)	Kanajak, AE	James Aguer Dut	D05	M	27	single / 0	April 2010	27	32:59
22.11.2012 (Thu)	Kanajak, AE	Diing Arol Manyang	D06+07	M	20	single / 0	Feb. 2011	20	36:06
22.11.2012 (Thu)	Kanajak, AE	Elisa Ayak Mokei	D08	F	18	married / 1	June 2011	18	32:05
24.11.2012 (Sat)	Bout Yar, AE	Teresa James Teng	D09+10+11	F	19	married / 1	Aug. 2012	19	43:37
24.11.2012 (Sat)	Bout Yar, AE	Peter Agoth Deng	D12	M	23	single / 0	July 2012	18	35:44
24.11.2012 (Sat)	Bout Yar, AE	Amou Lual Bol	D13	F	20	married / 2	Oct. 2011	20	24:57
26.11.2012 (Mo)	Wanijok, AE	Agol Atoc Geng	D14	F	19	married / 1	Dec. 2010	19	41:29
26.11.2012 (Mo)	Wanijok, AE	Alek Teresa Akooh	D15	F	20	married / 2	Dec. 2010	20	25:47

\* Names were changed to keep the respondents' anonymity; age and duration are estimated values for some respondents.