

Discussion on children in conflict and democracy: the case of South Sudan



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Department
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Programme
30 January 2024



Time	Agenda Item	Delegate
10:00 – 10:10	Opening and Welcome by Moderator	Prof Nicasius Check Achu: Chief Research Specialist & Director of Research (Acting) at AISA
10:10 – 10:20	Overview of AISA and research projects	Dr Palesa Sekhejane: Executive Head of AISA (Acting) and Director of Strategic Partnerships
10:20 – 10:30	Introduction	Dr Margaret Monyani: Post-Doctoral researcher, Department of Politics and International Relations
10:30 – 10:55	Nation-building and youth development - Historical overview of South Sudan to understand national-building trajectory	Dr Sonja Theron: Lecturer, Department of Political Sciences UP
11:00 – 11:25	Collaboration with international organisations and non-governmental organisations to provide resources and expertise pertaining to: - Existing and new comprehensive reintegration programmes that include education, vocational training, and psychosocial support Ensuring that programmes address the specific needs of children	Ms Susan Bahman: UNICEF Child Protection Specialist
11:25 – 12:00	Monitoring and reporting mechanisms towards peace and stability, and the protection of children: - Existing and required initiatives to track the progress of reintegration programmes and their role in holding institutions accountable for their implementation - Existing and required assessment and adjustment systems based on the evolving needs of children and communities for the long-term success of these initiatives	Advocate Isaac Kawai Steve: Managing partner at Kawai & Bol Law Firm
12:00 – 12:30	Q&A	
12:30 – 12:45	Closing and vote of thanks by Dr Palesa Sekhejane	
12:45 – 13:15	Lunch and Networking	

Speaker Bios



Prof. Nicasius Achu Check

Chief Research Specialist & Director of Research (Acting) at AISA

Prof. Nicasius Achu Check is a Golden Key scholar and a senior research specialist in the governance, peace and security research programme of the HSRC's Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA). He holds a Doctor of Literature and Philosophy (Political Studies) from the University of Johannesburg (2016). Check specialises in decolonial politics, France-Africa relations, African post-colonial state-building initiatives, genocide studies, African philosophy, humanities on the African continent and African development initiatives. Before joining AISA, Check was a junior lecturer in the Department of History at Vista University Distance Education Campus where he taught modules on the spread of Islam in West Africa, Pan Africanism and decolonisation.

He has led several research projects at the HSRC, all of which have culminated in co-edited books. These include *Cooperative Diplomacy, Regional Stability and National Interests: The Nile River and Riparian States* (2012), *Regenerating Africa: Bringing African Solutions to African Problems* (2017) and *France's Africa Relations: Domination, Continuity and Contradiction* (2019).

During the past decade, he has mostly conducted his research in the area of governance, peace and security with a specific focus on African peace and security architecture, governance reforms within the African Union and related institutions and post-colonial nation-building initiatives.

Check has produced more than 25 peer-reviewed publications, including 16 chapters in edited books, 14 journal articles, 9 policy briefs and 6 occasional papers. He has also presented papers at more than 12 international conferences. He currently sits on the editorial committee of *Africa Insight*, a peer-reviewed journal accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training. He is a steering committee member of the African Peer Review Mechanism's School of Governance, a member of the Board of the Department of Politics and International Relations, at the University of Botswana, and a board member of Riara University's International Relations Department in Nairobi, Kenya.



Dr Palesa Sekhejane

Executive Head AISA (Acting) and Director of Strategic Partnerships

Dr Palesa Sekhejane is the executive head (interim) of the HSRC's Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA), leading Africa-focused research. . She is also the director of Strategic Partnerships with a special focus on Africa relations for delivering on continental strategies. Before, Sekhejane was a research specialist in AISA conducting research in health sciences, innovation and biomedical technology developments and policy-relevant thematic areas in various African countries.

She was recently appointed to serve on the decision committee for a Science for Africa Foundation Africa programme, namely Preparing Outstanding Social Science Investigators to Benefit Lives and Environments (POSSIBLE-Africa). Sekhejane holds a DPhil (Health Sciences) in Biomedical Technology, specialising in Biophotonics, with advanced training from University of Illinois (USA). She serves in a research ethics committee with special focus on biomedical-oriented studies. Additionally, she is the chairperson of Gauteng's Technical Committee War Room on Crime and Law Enforcement. She was recently appointed in UNESCO's Natural Sciences Committee, and is a research associate at the University of Johannesburg in the Applied Sciences Research Unit, Faculty of Sciences. Sekhejane is a former member of the African Union's Economic Social & Cultural Council on Women and Gender Cluster. Her interests are in health and sciences research and innovations, women and youth. Her recent co-authored publications include "South Africa's Vaccine Production Potential: Towards an Intra-BRICS Vaccine Production Framework" as well as "The Gauteng Province Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019 Grade 9 Results".



Dr Margaret Monyani

Post-Doctoral Researcher, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Johannesburg (UJ)

Dr Margaret Monyani is a dedicated migration researcher with over ten years of experience. Her professional journey has been anchored in the realms of policy research and university-level teaching. Monyani's expertise centres on conceptualising and executing research projects that explore the complex intersections of gender, migration, peace, security, and development.

She holds a solid academic foundation from the University of the Witwatersrand, where she honed her theoretical knowledge and research skills. This academic grounding, coupled with diverse experiences in institutions such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Institute for Security Studies, and the Mastercard Foundation, has endowed her with a unique blend of theoretical prowess and pragmatic insights.

Her approach to research goes beyond theoretical exploration; it is driven by a passion to translate complex concepts into actionable insights. She prides herself on creating research projects that contribute significantly to academic discourse while offering practical solutions to real-world challenges in the migration and security sectors. In her roles, both as a policy analyst and an educator, she consistently strives to merge rigorous academic research with practical, ground-level perspectives. This synthesis of knowledge and experience enables her to make a meaningful impact in the fields of migration research and policy development.



Ms Susan Bahman

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Child protection specialist

Susan Bahman is a Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF South Sudan, specializing in child protection in emergencies, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and children associated with armed forces and groups. She brings extensive experience to her role, having worked in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Greece.

In South Sudan, Susan has focused on addressing Children Associated with Armed Conflict (CAAC) and expanding child protection through partnerships with local NGOs. Her contributions include case management support, psychosocial assistance, reintegration efforts, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) support. Susan's prior experience encompasses Child Protection, Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms (MRM), and CAAC work in Afghanistan, as well as general protection efforts in refugee contexts in Greece.



Dr Sonja Theron

Lecturer, Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria (UP)

Dr Sonja Theron is a lecturer at UP in the Department of Political Sciences and a senior associate fellow at the African Leadership Centre (ALC) at King's College London. She was the programme director for research in the Centre of Mediation in Africa from 2020 to 2022. From 2018 to 2020, Theron was appointed as the first Joint-Post-doctoral Research Fellow between the University of Pretoria and ALC. She has also worked at the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation and as a consultant on various research projects related to peace and security.

She recently published a book with Bloomsbury Academic Press titled *Leadership, Nation-building and War in South Sudan: The Problems of Statehood and Collective Will*. The book challenges the notion that the historical and continued violence in South Sudan's nation-building process can be reduced to either identity differences or the fault of individual leaders. Rather, it uses the leadership process to understand the complex progressions and relationships that have characterised South Sudan's nation-building trajectory.

Theron completed an MA Fellowship from 2011–2013 at the ALC, and served as an intern/visiting fellow for 6 months between 2012–2013 at the Institute of Development Studies, at the University of Nairobi. Theron obtained her Doctor of Philosophy qualification from the University of Pretoria, during which she received the Commonwealth Split-Site PhD Scholarship, tenured at King's College London.



Advocate Isaac Kawai Steve

Partner at Kawai & Bol (KB) Law Firm

Advocate Kawai and partner – Bol Tut Luny – established a law firm in April 2023 with the aim to offer legal services in South Sudan and Eastern Africa. He holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB(Hons)) from Moi University School of Law and Postgraduate Diploma from Kenya School of Law. Adv. Kawai was admitted to the Bar in Kenya in February 2020, making him a member of both the South Sudan Bar Association and Law Society of Kenya.



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