

# Human Security Survey 2020 Annual Summary Report Unity State, South Sudan

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- Payinjiar respondents report that general **security levels declined** in 2019-2020 compared to data collected in 2017-18, with geographical differences: Relative improvements were reported in Greater Nyal, while communities from Greater Ganyliel reported a worsening security situation in their area bordering Lakes State.
- **Victimization rates** among respondents have dropped from **77%** of respondents reporting at least one security incident during the last year in 2018, to **57%** in 2020. Most types of incidents also saw lower reported cases in 2020 compared to 2018.
- **Widespread flooding** has increased in Payinjiar and could become not only an annual humanitarian emergency, but also aggravate longer-term pressures on already scarce resources and the intercommunal peace process in the coming years.
- Overall **reliance on cattle for provision of dowries** (“bride price”) leads to tensions within and between extended families, which fuel cattle raids and forced marriages.

## Introduction & Methodology

The Human Security Survey (HSS) is a unique survey methodology developed by PAX, that includes a series of complementary activities, including population-based research, active community engagement, and advocacy. The objectives of the HSS are: 1) to increase knowledge and understanding of local human security dynamics and trends; 2) to enhance the ‘claim-making capacity’ of civilians to hold security providers and decision-makers accountable; and 3) to inform evidence-based advocacy that enables international stakeholders to design and implement protection activities that reflect local realities. PAX currently implements the HSS in South Sudan in close collaboration with local field partners on the ground.

This survey cycle was the third to take place in Unity State, after the initial data collections in 2017 and 2018. This third data collection in Unity State took place in the

course of three weeks in October 2020 by **10** enumerators (9 men, 1 woman) who were trained for four days in data collection skills and procedures. A total of **450** surveys were collected across 12 *payams*<sup>1</sup> in the

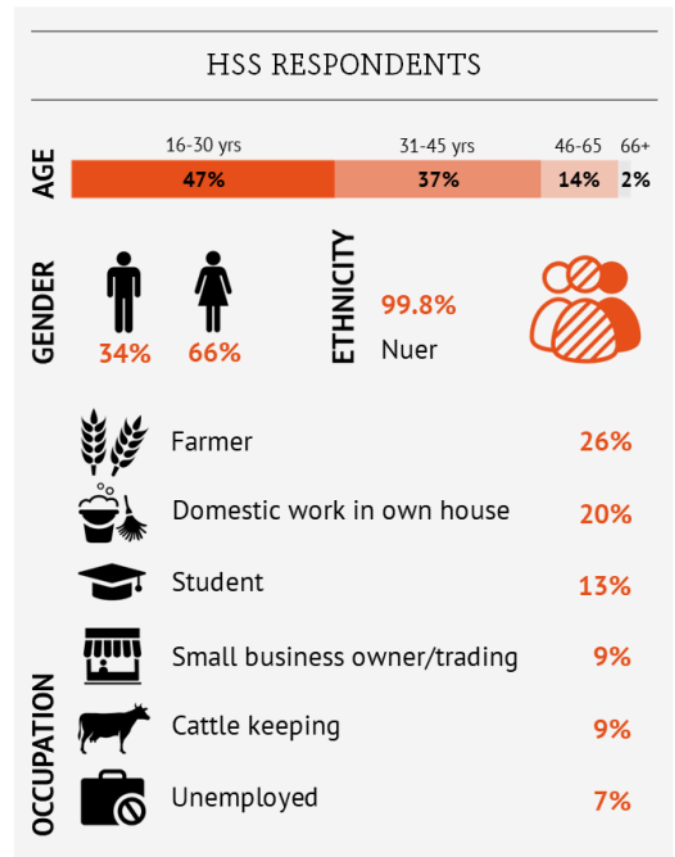
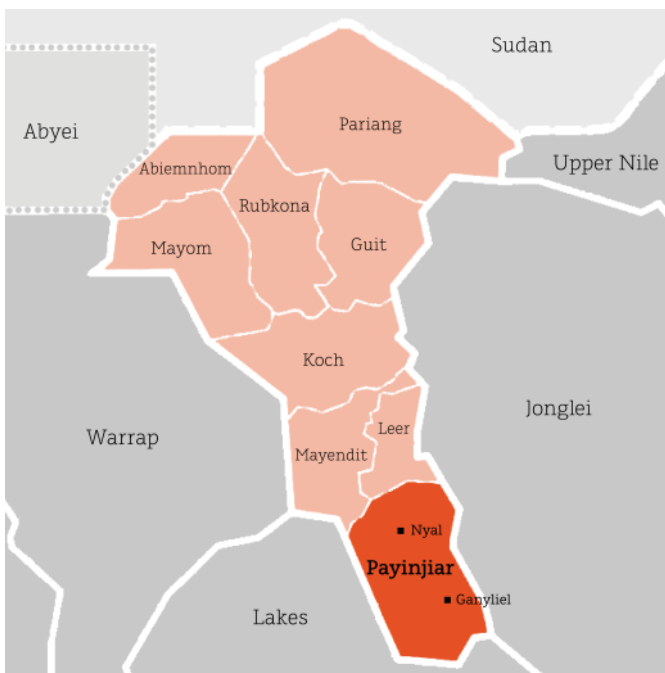
## MAP OF SOUTH SUDAN



Greater Ganyliel and Greater Nyal areas of Payinjiar county, Unity State.<sup>2</sup> Within these payams, households and individual respondents were selected using an approximately random procedure to allow for some generalizability.<sup>3</sup>

In May 2021 PAX, Assistance Mission to Africa (AMA) and the local Community Security Committee (COMSECCOM) in Payinjiar County, facilitated a 3-day community validation and security dialogue in Ganyliel. During this three-day dialogue the main survey findings and its practical implications were presented, discussed, and validated; participants suggested main priorities and practical ways of addressing the main security issues, culminating in a community action plan. The local Community Security Committee (COMSECCOM) was set up in 2017 after the first data collection cycle and consists of concerned community members of different backgrounds. They presented its main activities and achievements regarding the 2018 community action

MAP OF UNITY STATE



plan. The COMSECCOM will also take responsibility to implement the new action plan agreed based on 2020-21 data and communal discussions during the upcoming 1-1.5 years. This way, initiatives to address locally identified security issues really originate from the community, and will also be locally followed up and accounted for, genuinely representing community-based grassroots capacities.

### Demographics of the survey sample

Almost all (99.8%) of respondents indicated that they belonged to the ethnic group of Nuer, reflecting the most common ethnic group across Unity's Payinjiar county. Almost half (47%) of respondents were between 16-30 years of age, about a third (37%) were between

### HSS data collection during a pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic also hit South Sudan in 2020, affecting the implementation of the Human Security Survey in various ways. After South Sudan went into a lockdown in late March 2020, PAX office and field activities were hibernated for several months. When the country slowly re-opened in July, PAX and field partners gradually returned to data collection in the field under COVID-19 imposed restrictions.

These restrictions varied from travel restrictions, as well as limitations posed on the size of gatherings and the interaction during trainings. This meant that only 10 enumerators could be trained in Ganyliel in September

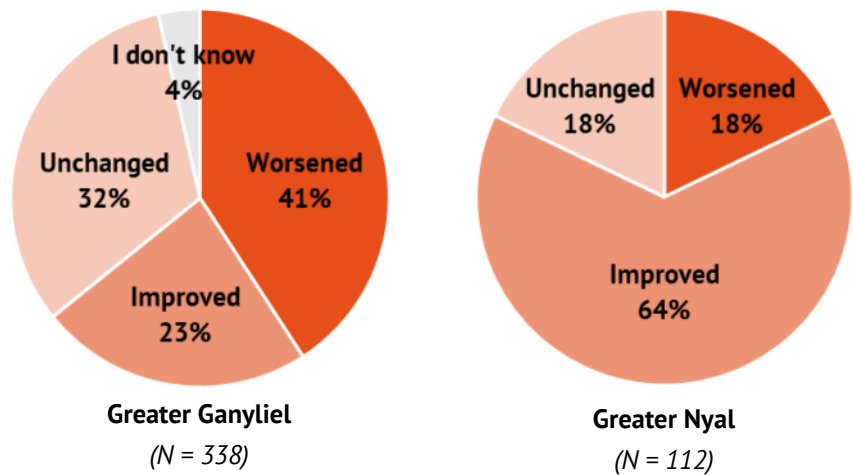
2020, where Covid-related instructions for field data collection were introduced to the curriculum, limiting the travel movements and social interactions of enumerators with their respondents.

On top of this, data collection had to take place during the rainy season. During the rainy season of 2020, Payinjiar County too was affected by devastating floods, further restricting freedom of movement by the enumerators and their access to the targeted communities. Data collection therefore took place under difficult circumstances, and all planned data validation and dialogue sessions were postponed until May 2021.

the ages 31-45, **14%** were between 45-65 years of age and only **2%** were above 65 years old.<sup>4</sup> **66%** of respondents were female, **34%** were male, most likely because surveys were primarily conducted during the morning and afternoon hours. At those times, many men are out herding cattle, working the fields, or engaging in other livelihood activities away from their homes. Female family members are more likely to be found in and around the house to look after children and do domestic chores, which was also confirmed by some participants to the data validation workshop in Ganyiel. Other participants to that meeting claimed that female overrepresentation in the survey was due to the polygamous marriage customs among Nuer (“one man or household can have five or ten women”), or that “that females are majority in numbers in these results because men have been killed during wars, because men are fighters who go to fight, which has taken so many lives of men and therefore females remain.”<sup>5</sup>

Over a quarter of respondents (**26%**) indicated that they relied on subsistence agriculture as their main source of livelihood at the time of the interview, with other respondents relying on domestic work (**20%**), being a student (**13%**), cattle keeping (**9%**; **18%** of male respondents) and petty trading/small business (**9%**) or wage labour (**6%**; of which **48%** are NGO or community aid workers), while **7%** claimed to be unemployed and **9%** mentioned other sources of livelihood.<sup>6</sup> More than two-thirds (**68%**) of all respondents (**74%** of women, **56%** of men) indicated that they hadn’t completed any education, while **24%** completed primary education, and only **8%** completing a higher level than primary school. **91%** of respondents indicated that they have lived in their current payams since 2013, providing lower displacement and migration rates than we find in some other survey locations across South Sudan.

## HOW DID YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION CHANGE SINCE LAST YEAR? (2020)



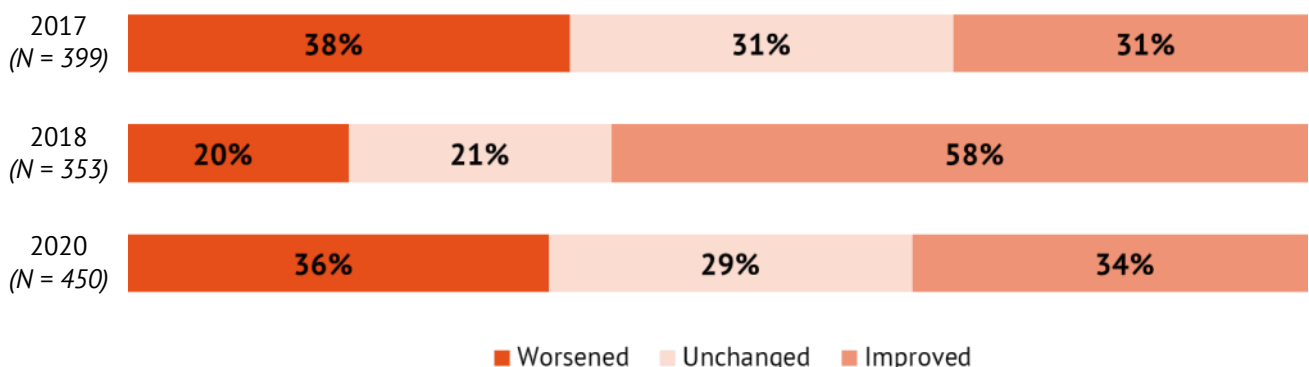
## MAIN FINDINGS

### Perception of the general security situation

How Payinjar communities perceive developments regarding their security situation over the last year (2019-2020) is quite mixed: over a third (**35%**) thought the security situation had worsened, a similar share (**34%**) however thought that the situation had improved, and a further **29%** said the security situation hadn’t changed. However, when these security perceptions on 2019-2020 are compared to previous data collection cycles, we see that after respondents were slightly negative in their outlook on 2016-2017 (**38%** of respondents claiming worsened security), perceptions generally improved in the 2017-2018 cycle (**58%** claiming improvement), with respondents’ outlook now dropping again to comparable levels as reported in 2017 (see figure below).<sup>7</sup>

Noteworthy is the contrast in security perceptions between Greater Ganyiel, where **41%** indicated a worsening security situation, and Greater Nyal, where almost two-thirds (**64%**) of respondents claimed security had improved over the year 2019-2020 (see figures

## HOW DID YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION CHANGE SINCE LAST YEAR? (2017-2020)



above). Most participants to the feedback session in Ganyliel could not provide a sound explanation for this difference, as a youth leader said this just might have been a temporary situation: *“I agree the security situation in Ganyliel is worse than in Nyal, but also we must consider the timing in which enumerators were sent out there in the community. If this current data we are now validating was collected between September and October 2020, then there is no wonder why Ganyliel people would say they are more insecure, because that was when there were two serious revenge fighting in Pachar and Pachienjok.”* And a chief added: *“if the views of some respondents in Nyal indicated that there was a bit of improvement of their local security compared to Ganyliel then I think it is not permanent, it is just for the time being because we have no permanent stability in South Sudan, let alone in Payinjiar county.”*

The worrying picture of worsening security levels across Payinjiar was somewhat contrasted by responses on a statement about how people perceived their immediate environment, with **73%** of respondents replying with either “very safe” or “somewhat safe”, and a quarter responding “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe”. Showing a similar picture were responses to the statement *“I generally feel safe from violence and crime in my community,”* with which **62%** of respondents agreed and **35%** disagreed.

The main practical consequences of reduced security<sup>8</sup> were “feeling more exposed to violence or harassment when out of the house” (**31%**), seeing “more weapons in the streets” (**28%**), seeing “more criminal gangs in the streets” (**22%**), having “more worries related to my livelihood” (**20%**), having “less access to food” (**19%**), “often feeling frightened or stressed” (**16%**), claims that “more strangers have moved into our areas” (**15%**), among other options receiving less than **10%** agreement.<sup>9</sup> Respondents who identified an improvement in security levels, felt “less exposed to violence, crime or harassment” (**77%**), or to a lesser extent, saw “fewer

weapons on the street” (**39%**), saw “fewer criminal gangs in the street” (**23%**), saw “more uniformed security forces patrolling the streets” (**22%**), could “travel more easily between my community and other areas” (**17%**), “left their home more often” (**15%**) or “were asked less bribes” (**11%**), among other options less mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

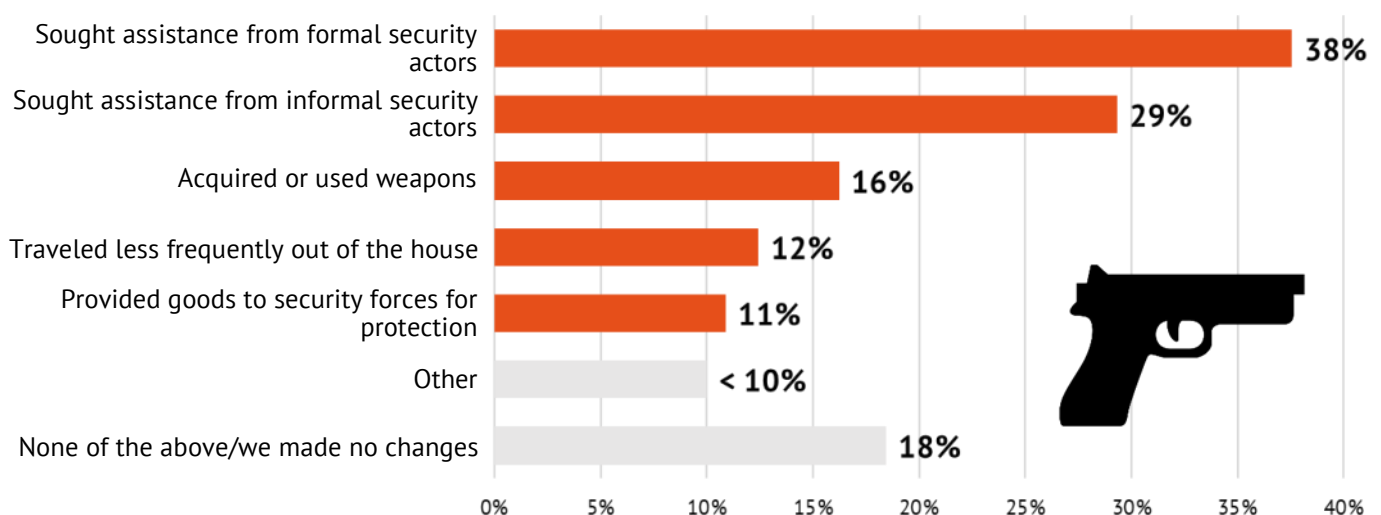
Irrespective of whether perceived insecurity levels improve or deteriorate, local communities generally develop coping strategies to existing levels of insecurity. Two-thirds (**67%**) of all respondents indicated that they “sought assistance from formal security forces” such as police in dealing with insecurity, **29%** said that they “sought assistance from informal security forces” such as armed youth, **16%** said they “acquired or used weapons” like guns or spears, **12%** “travelled less frequently outside of the home or avoided going to specific places,” **11%** “provided goods to security forces in return for protection,” among other options less often mentioned (see figure below).<sup>11</sup>

During the community data validation and dialogue meeting in Ganyliel, most participants confirmed and agreed with the views of the respondents. They interpreted the perceived decline in security levels collected in 2020 as the result of resurging communal violence between Payinjiar and neighboring Dinka communities from Lakes, with whom a local peace agreement was established in 2018. As a woman representative confirmed: *“Security was good at your second coming [in early 2019, AQ]. But now there is a lot of insecurity coming from ourselves, not even from our neighbours, and the flooding last year has also led to disputes and conflicts.”*

## Environment

For the first time since the inception of the Human Security Survey, a module on the physical environment and climate change, and their relation to (in)security, was added to the survey. The period of data collection

### IN THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU DONE THINGS TO PROTECT YOURSELF AS A RESULT OF INSECURITY? (N = 450)







An enumerator is traveling between households for data collection amidst heavy flooding in Payinjiar County (Unity State, 6 October 2020)

was October 2020, at the end of the rainy season in Unity State. That year however, the rainy season was marred with serious floods, affecting large parts of Payinjiar County, as well as others states striding the Nile River, affecting communities for many months after the rains receded. The floods and their aftermath also had an impact on the data collection process, limiting enumerators' access to certain communities, or making transportation between communities more difficult, relying on canoes in the swamps straddling the Nile's west bank.

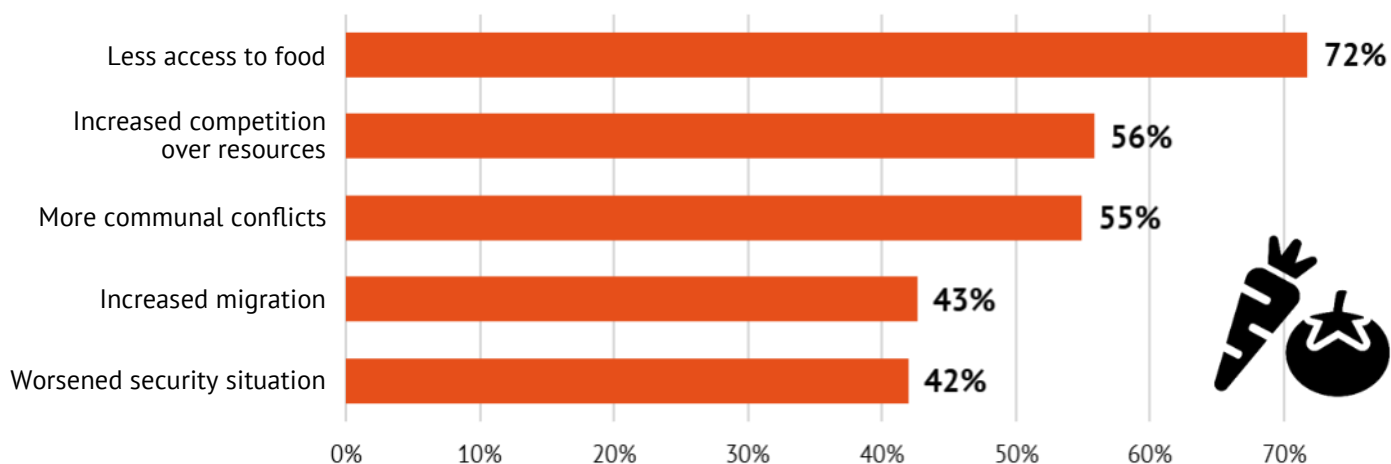
Considering these circumstances during data collection,

it came as no surprise that flooding was mentioned by **91%** of respondents as being the most prevalent environmental change observed in Payinjiar County,<sup>12</sup> followed by **32%** indicating temperature changes, **30%** experiencing less predictable rainfall, **22%** experiencing changes in the duration of dry and rainy seasons, and **16%** mentioned increased drought.<sup>13</sup> On the consequences of these environmental changes to their community, almost three-quarters (**72%**) of respondents claimed that it affected their access to food, **56%** said it increased competition over scarce resources like water or pastures, **55%** said it fuelled communal conflicts, **43%** said that it increased migration among communities and **42%** said the general security situation worsened due to the environmental changes (see figure below).<sup>14</sup>

We asked respondents how they cope with these negative impacts of environmental changes on their community. More than three-quarters of them (**79%**) indicated that “NGOs teach us new practices that help us to continue our livelihood or make necessary changes to our livelihood despite environmental changes,” whereas more than half (**55%**) answered that local authorities in their area are able to address environmental changes. An additional **35%** said that their community members/leaders should agree with neighbouring communities to share and exchange resources in times of shortage and contested access, and **33%** said that their families could migrate part of the year to locations where conditions are better.

Participants to the data validation workshop in Ganyliel agreed “**100%**” with the experiences provided by the respondents and warned that floods could affect the prevalence of communal violence across Payinjiar, as one woman said: “people are stressed as a result of youth losing their animals to the water and farms who got destroyed, hence [we fear] rise of cattle theft from neighbouring communities. There is a need for PAX to advocate to humanitarian organizations like World Food

#### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES IN YOUR AREA? (N = 446)



Program to provide food to the Payinjar community that was affected by flooding. The flooding will be worse still this year. On top of the need for food distribution we need support to the construction of dykes, and let PAX purchase us a canoe to be used to ferry children to dry lands.”

Another woman told about current attempts by communities to prevent themselves against flooding: “As a community we have tried to construct a dyke to address the consequences of environmental changes, but they got defeated by the wave of flooding and everything was destroyed leaving people hopeless. Flooding has led to a lot of misbehaviour in the community. The local government also set up a community sensitization committee to alert people on the consequences of flooding, like the increase of waterborne diseases and snakebites, leading to loss of lives.”

### Incident reporting

Apart from environmental challenges to human security, community members in Payinjar County have to deal with a variety of security-related incidents and threats. Over half (**57%**) of all respondents indicated that they experienced one or more security incident in the previous year, down from **77%** of respondents in 2018 and **73%** in 2017. **21%** of respondents actually reported only one security incident happening to them or their household over the last year, **9%** reported two incidents, another **9%** reported three incidents and a total of **17%** reported four or more security incidents over the last year. All 450 respondents reported a total of 694 incidents, **28%** of which referred to murder cases, **26%** to cattle raids, **21%** to forced recruitment into security forces or armed groups, **20%** to forced marriage, **16%** to



**91%**

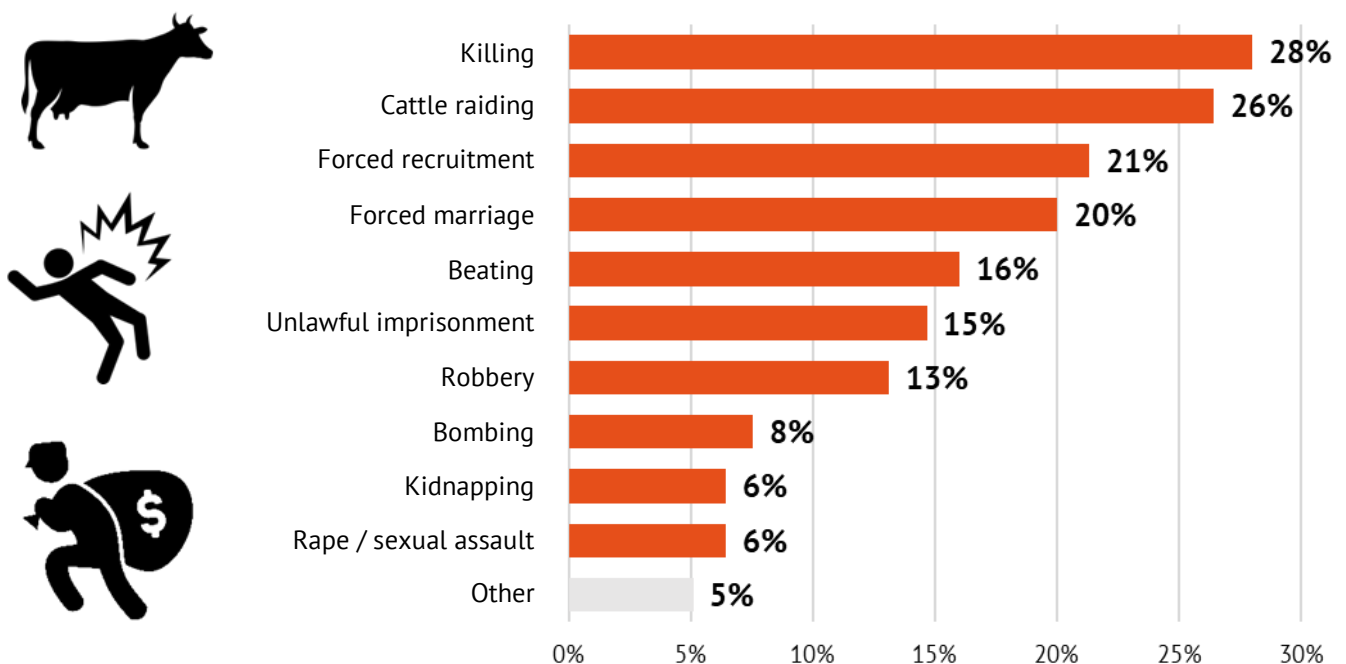
Respondents observing increased flooding

assault, physical abuse or beating, **15%** to unlawful imprisonment and **13%** to a robbery, with other types of incidents amounting to less than **10%** each (see figure below).

When we compare the frequency of incidents with data collected in 2018 and 2017 for the three most reported incidents, we notice that the rates of murder (‘killing’) and cattle raiding have decreased since 2018 (although cattle raiding had higher frequency in 2020 compared to 2017), while the reported rate for forced recruitment has slightly decreased compared to 2018, but is still at a much higher rate than reported in 2017 (see figure on next page).

Most participants to the data validation workshop confirmed these results, even though the numbers for forced recruitment were challenged during the meeting. A pastor explained why it is challenging to make a distinction between the various types of security incidents, as many of them take place simultaneously: “cattle raiding and kidnapping often go together, the raiders would also kidnap kids and raid cattle at the same time, even killing happens sometimes if there is a confrontation.”

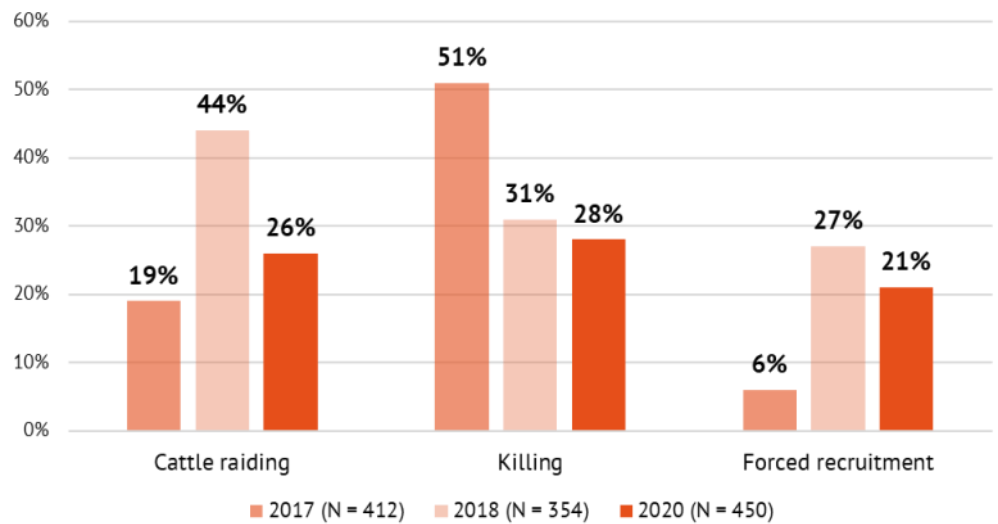
HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING AN INCIDENT (N = 450)



Across all security incidents, men are reportedly victimized much more frequently than women: **58%** of reported incidents involved adult men as victims and in **19%** boys were victimized, while adult women (**18%**) and girls (**16%**) were less frequently identified as being victims of the reported security incidents.<sup>15</sup> The majority of participants to the data validation workshop did not support the views by the respondents who said young men and boys are the ones who are most exposed to violence.

Although some participants agreed with the community view because young men are primarily involved in cattle raiding and revenge killing, being a cause of violence

**HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING AN INCIDENT (2017-2020)**



because of carrying arms and therefore have a higher likelihood to be affected by that violence as well. But the majority of participants said that where insecurity is,

### Forced marriage of girls and women

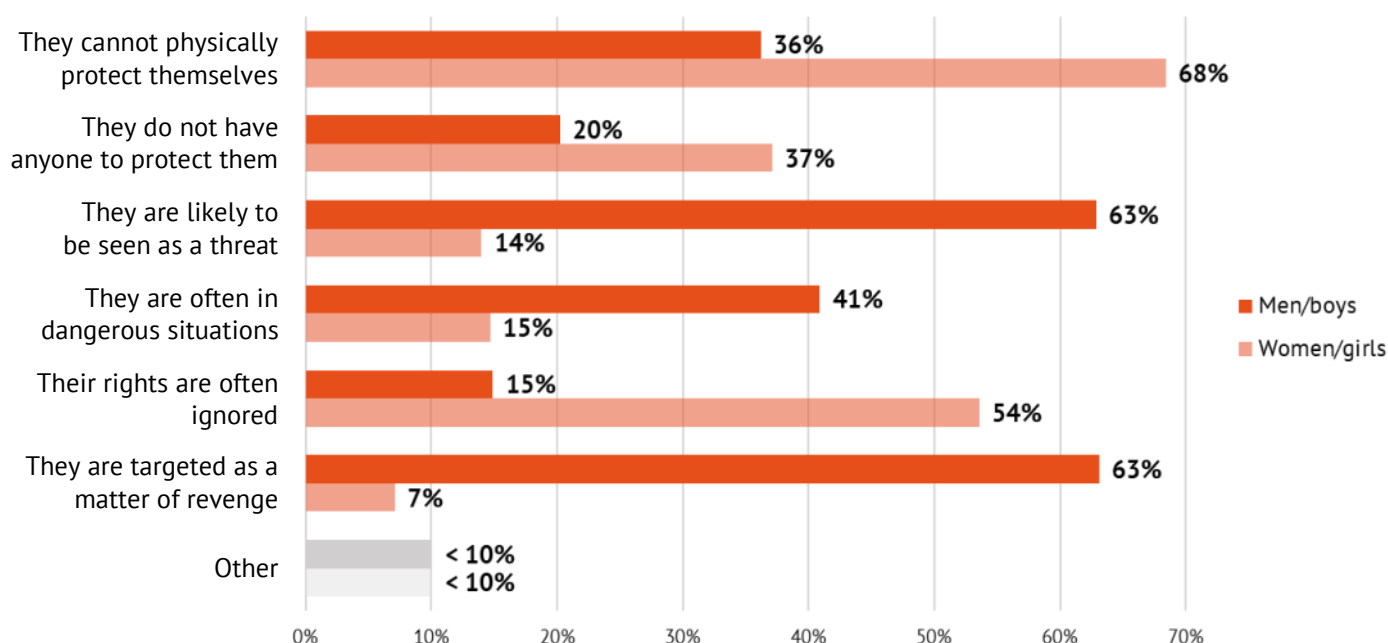
The practice of forced marriage is connected to the traditional system of marrying off girls and women to men in exchange for cows, known as a dowry or bride price. Because of the serious expenses involved (dowries are dependent on the status of the bride and her family, her perceived beauty and age; dowry rates can also differ geographically based on cattle prices), and the cattle for paying dowries has to be assembled by various family members, dowries do not just matter to the couple or in-laws, but occupy entire extended families. These communal pressures surrounding the selection of suitable marriage partners, dowry negotiations and payments often lead to disagreements and quarrels, or pressures from within the family to either accept or refuse a certain marriage partner. For this reason, many marital and family conflicts find their root cause in arguments surrounding the provision or return of dowry payments. Furthermore, two-thirds (**68%**) of survey respondents acknowledge the correlation between increased dowry prices and more frequent cattle raiding occurrences.

While family pressures and forced marriage can befall both male and female partners, it is especially the women who are vulnerable to forced marriage, due to young marital age, the widespread practice of polygamy in (rural) South Sudan, and the fact that primarily girls and young women are seen as a “family asset”, that has an equivalent value measured in cattle, which can be monetized when the need for cows or equivalent wealth arises. **85%** of respondents to the survey confirmed this by agreeing to the statement “an early or forced marriage happens because there is a need for cows (dowry),” with even **89%** of respondents in Greater Ganyiel

recognizing this link between the need for cows and the likelihood of forced marriage.

However, among the participants to the feedback session in Ganyiel, the subject of forced marriage and the rights and responsibilities of family members regarding dowries led to an animated discussion among mainly traditional leaders (chiefs) and youth and women civil society representatives: “it was our culture as Dinka and Nuer that when someone came to you with cows and you have your daughter you give her out, if she doesn’t agree you use force. In the old days these kind of things were not spoken about. I do believe now change is real. [But] we all know that if two people ask you to marry your daughter, you give your daughter to one that has given you more cows,” said a chief. Another said: “Because of human rights, girls are saying it is their right marry their choice even when he has no cows, but is it not the right of a father too to have something from her daughter? Now the lifestyle has changed, girls have abandoned the traditional dance and have adopted Congolese music. They are spoiled.” Stressing the changing perspectives between generations, a youth representative countered the views of the chiefs: “there are two things involved in forced marriage, especially when the girl is young. She will have difficulty during delivery, and secondly the young lady that was forcefully married off against her will shall not live a happy life in that house. She will be stressed, any slight mistake amounts to a quarrel and fight between her and her husband, this is because they do not love each other. They live like strangers to each other, this will lead to divorce, or adultery and many more other consequences. It may lead to loss of life if the husband beats the lady, and the problems continue.”

## WHY ARE MEN/BOYS AND WOMEN/GIRLS EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE? (N = 450)



every person irrespective of age or gender is equally affected or exposed to violence.

**21%** of respondents who reported one or more security incidents happening to themselves or a household member, generally perceived that “someone from a neighbouring community” were the most likely perpetrators of these incidents, together with criminals (also **21%**), and followed by local armed youth (**13%**), the police (**11%**), someone from own community (**10%**), and someone from their own family (**10%**), with other response options scoring a total of **13%**.<sup>16</sup>

In almost two-thirds (**62%**) of all incidents, the respondent indicated that their household contacted someone outside their household to help them resolve the incident they experienced.<sup>17</sup> The most contacted actors were the police (**48%**), local leaders (chiefs; **44%**), family or friends (**29%**), local government officials (**27%**), the SPLA-IO (**16%**) or local armed youth (**12%**), among other actors receiving less than **10%** of reports from respondents.<sup>18</sup> When we look at the four most reported security incidents, the police was contacted in **58%** of all reported murder cases, **61%** of reported cattle raids, **36%** of forced recruitment cases and **49%** of forced marriage cases. Local traditional leaders or chiefs were called in **58%** of murder cases, **51%** of cattle raids, **57%** of forced recruitment cases and **51%** of forced marriage cases.<sup>19</sup>

A third (**33%**) of the respondents seeking outside assistance in resolving the incident, were not satisfied with the outcome or quality of the response received. Of those, **74%** indicated they were unsatisfied because “the perpetrator was not caught,” followed by “no compensation for their losses was offered” (**41%**), and “the perpetrator was not punished” (also **41%**), among other options less

reported.<sup>20</sup> The **64%** of respondents who requested assistance and were satisfied with the response, said that because “the perpetrator was caught and punished” (**81%**), “honor was restored to the family” (**15%**), “compensation for their losses was offered” (**15%**), “reconciliation with the perpetrator took place” (**14%**) or “revenge was taken against the perpetrator” (**10%**), among less mentioned other options.<sup>21</sup>

### Vulnerability

As could be seen already in the victimization rates of men, women, boys and girls at the reported incidents, the level of vulnerability of certain groups in society is very contextual. **70%** of respondents claimed that “some people in this community are more likely to be exposed to violence than others,” while **28%** were of the opinion that “all people in this community are equally likely to be exposed to violence.” When the former were asked which groups in society are most vulnerable to be victims of violence, **60%** indicated these were young men and boys, followed by cattle keepers (**31%**), people from specific ethnic groups (**26%**), young women and girls (**24%**), and family members of people who serve in the security forces (**17%**).<sup>22</sup>



# 60%

“Young men and boys are the most vulnerable to violence”



In a similar fashion, more than half of respondents (52%) agreed to the statement that “men and boys are more likely to be exposed to violence,” with 32% saying that “men/boys and women/girls are equally likely to be exposed to violence” and only 13% claiming that “women and girls are most likely to be exposed to violence.”

Almost two-thirds of respondents (63%) thought that men and boys’ vulnerability stems from “likely being seen as a threat” and “being targeted as revenge” (also 63%), or “often being in dangerous situations” (41%), “not being able to protect themselves” (36%), and “being often out of the house” (31%), among less mentioned options.<sup>23</sup> Women’s and girls’ vulnerability, on the other hand, was because “they cannot physically protect themselves” (68%), “their rights are often ignored” (54%), or “they don’t have anyone to protect them” (37%), well before other options less mentioned (see graph on previous page).<sup>24</sup>

During the data validation workshop, as reported earlier, participants did not agree with the community data suggesting that men and boys were most vulnerable to be victimized compared to women and girls. Even though few participants argued that this is true because young men are mainly involved in cattle raiding and revenge killing incidents, claiming many lives, while also causing it themselves as young men carry arms. But the majority attending the meeting said that when there is insecurity every person is affected or exposed to violence, irrespective of gender or age.

## Security actor performance

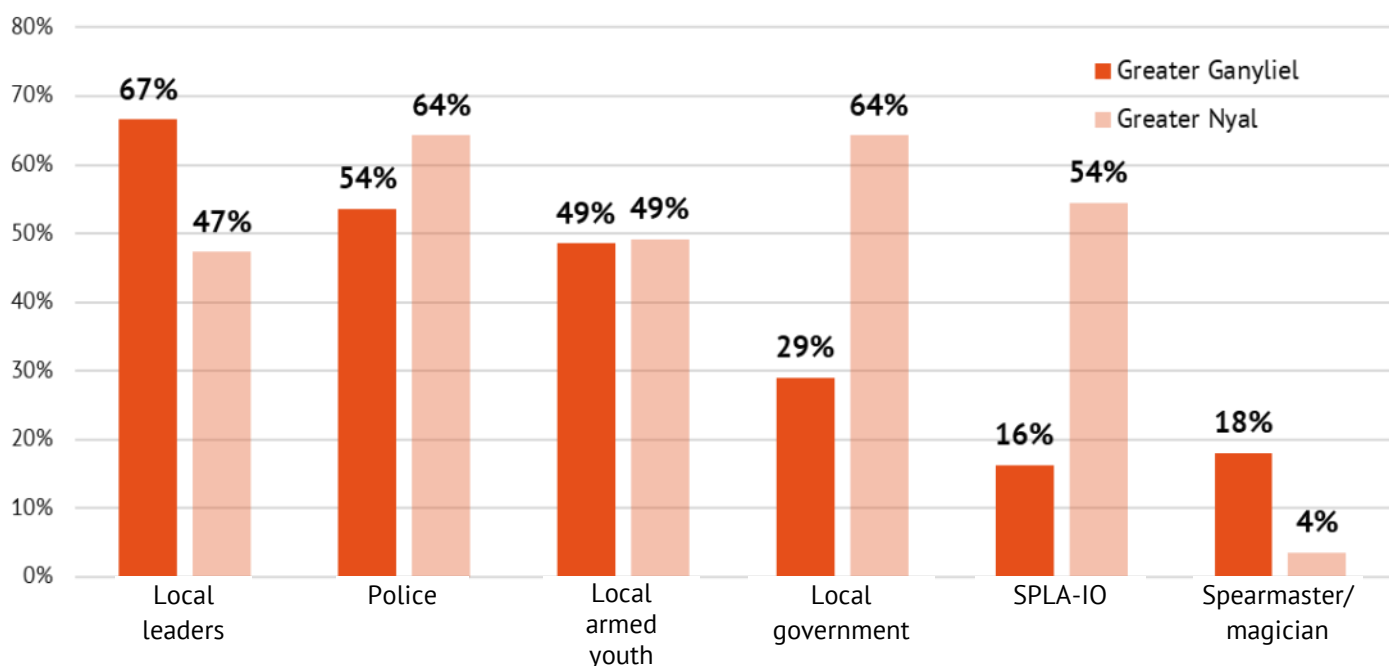
Respondents were asked which of the listed (security) actors they trusted the most. More than half (58%) of respondents mentioned the police, closely followed by local leaders like chiefs and religious leaders (57%),

local armed youth (43%), local government officials, like County Commissioners (40%), SPLA-IO (25%),<sup>25</sup> and spearmasters or magicians (14%), with other options receiving less than 5%.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, when asked which security actors were actually present and accessible in their respective payams throughout Payinjiar County, local leaders (chiefs) came out as most accessible security actor according to 62% of all respondents, followed by the police (56%), local armed youth (49%), local government officials (“Commissioner”; 38%), SPLA-IO (26%) and spearmasters/magicians (14%).<sup>27</sup> However, there are some regional variations between Greater Ganyliel and Greater Nyal areas, with the more formal security actors seemingly having a more robust presence in Greater Nyal compared to Greater Ganyliel (see the figure below). Participants to the data validation workshop confirmed that Greater Nyal had better police facilities than in Greater Ganyliel, “Ganyliel only has a container but Nyal has two police stations.” The increased presence of SPLA-IO in Greater Nyal was blamed on specific armed incidents taking place in the Greater Nyal area at the time of data collection, with which SPLA-IO was involved, and this would therefore not reflect the usual state of affairs, according to workshop participants.

Both presence and preference of police is generally slightly higher than that of local armed youth, however the legitimacy of local armed youth and the self-protection mechanism they represent, was prevalent from community’s views regarding the statement “In my payam we trust local armed youth for our security more than any outsiders.” More than two-thirds (68%) of all respondents agreed with this statement, while 31%

WHICH SECURITY ACTORS ARE PRESENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY? (N = 450)



disagreed.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, **62%** of all respondents agreed that “my community relies on local armed youth to provide protection and security,” while **37%** said their community relies on the police for security provision.

However, this tendency to prefer local and accessible law enforcement actors remained in a precarious balance, with **46%** of all respondents agreeing that “It is best when security forces are recruited from within our own community because they know us,” while slightly half (**51%**) of respondents agreed that “It is best when security forces are from outside the payam, because they do not take sides.”<sup>29</sup> Generally, the trust in police was high as two-thirds of respondents agreed that “police take community reports seriously and are helpful in resolving them,” with **26%** disagreeing. **59%** claimed that men and women are treated equally by police when they report cases, with a third disagreeing with this statement. However, **73%** of respondents thought that there should be more women serving in the police to help address security issues affecting women better, and three-quarters would support women from their own families to apply for a position in the police force.

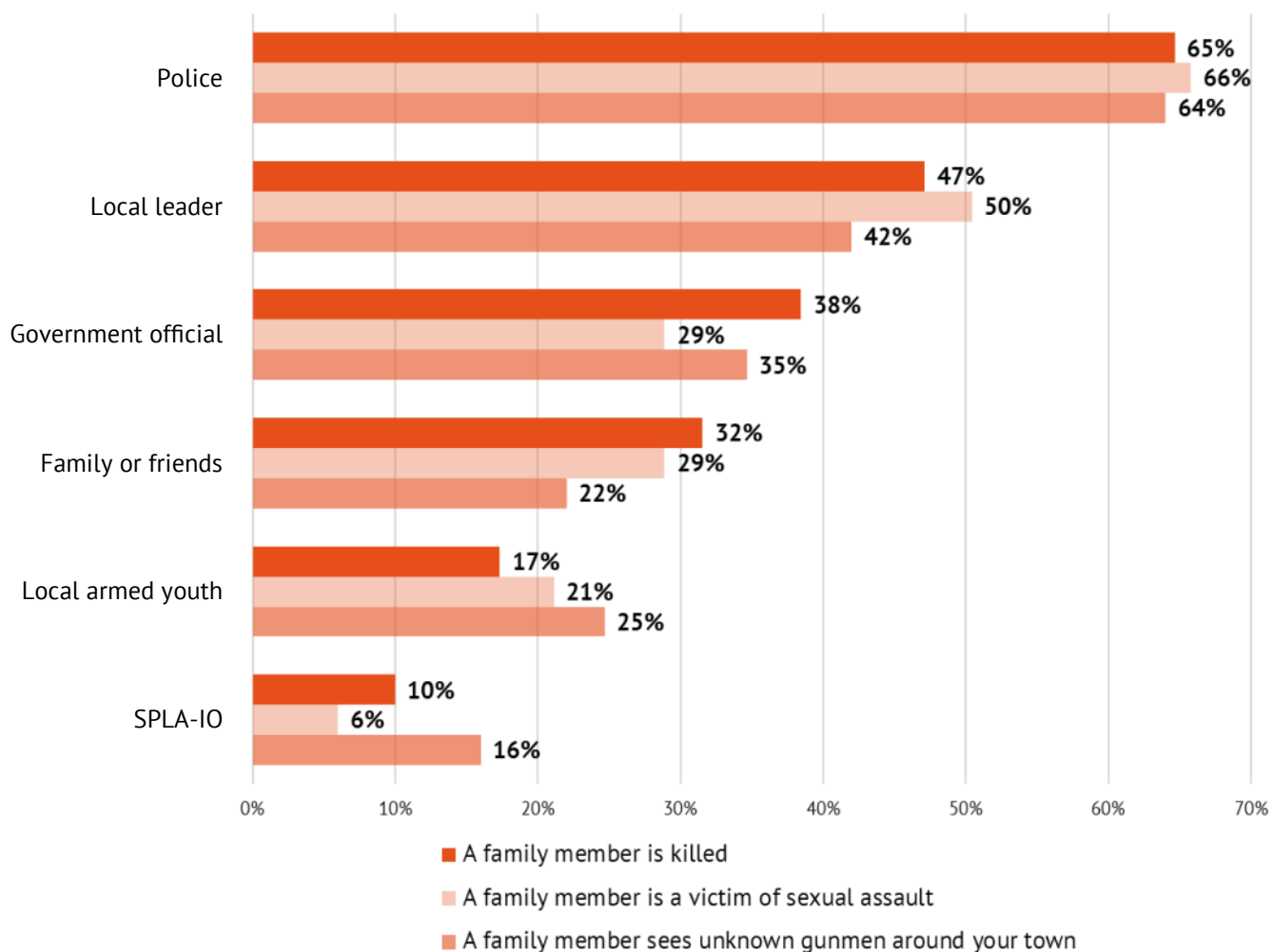
While formal law enforcement actors seem to have a slight preference by the community in security provision,

a clear majority of **86%** of all respondents prefers informal justice provision and communal dispute resolution by local community leaders or chiefs,<sup>30</sup> over the judges and lawyers representing the state court system, preferred by just **14%** of respondents. Over three-quarters (**76%**) of respondents argued that more women should serve in the local court system in support of women’s access to justice, with **18%** disagreeing to this proposition.

Chiefs who attended the data validation meeting in Ganyiel pointed to the challenges of being reliant on young and untrained armed youth for security provision when it comes to accountability: “Youth and guns is a big problem, because youths are still young and were not trained on the rules of possession of guns, leading to violence in the community.” This also leads to youth undermining the legitimacy of chiefs: “we chiefs have lost our authority into the hands of armed youth, they do not listen to our advice and orders.”

A police inspector confirmed that the authority of chiefs has eroded as a result: “chiefs have no words and authority [anymore], it is the youths that have power because of guns. Due to the availability of arms in the hands of civilians, chiefs and police are always threatened

#### WHO WOULD YOU CONTACT IF THE FOLLOWING HAPPENED? (N = 450)



[by them]”. A woman added: “Our youths don’t respect elders, instead they have been trying to kill them in revenge, what a society is this that we are in now? Back in the old days chiefs were respected, chiefs now don’t intervene because they can be killed [in revenge].” A local committee member gave a another practical example of what formal security actors might confront when “youth want to loot and the community provides food to security forces. In return, formal forces protect NGOs and markets to prevent local armed youths from looting.” Alternatively, it was noted that “chiefs are the ones who instruct police to arrest certain suspects or criminals and to pay compensations for their crimes.”

The group of so-called “spearmasters” or magicians was also mentioned by 1 out of 7 respondents as being an important presence influencing security in Payinjiar. They often hold considerable (informal) power in the community, having the ability to recruit youth in engaging in potentially deadly cattle raids. They are believed to be capable of guaranteeing a successful raid or making participating youth invincible against bullets through their powerful rituals and sacrifices. Participants to the data validation workshop played down their power somewhat, but conceded that they can hold substantial power over (armed) youth: “spearmasters do not have a very big role but their minor role can be crucial, for example if there is a fighting in the community they can help to separate the people, as they listen to them. Youth also listens to them and they can stop or bring rain.”

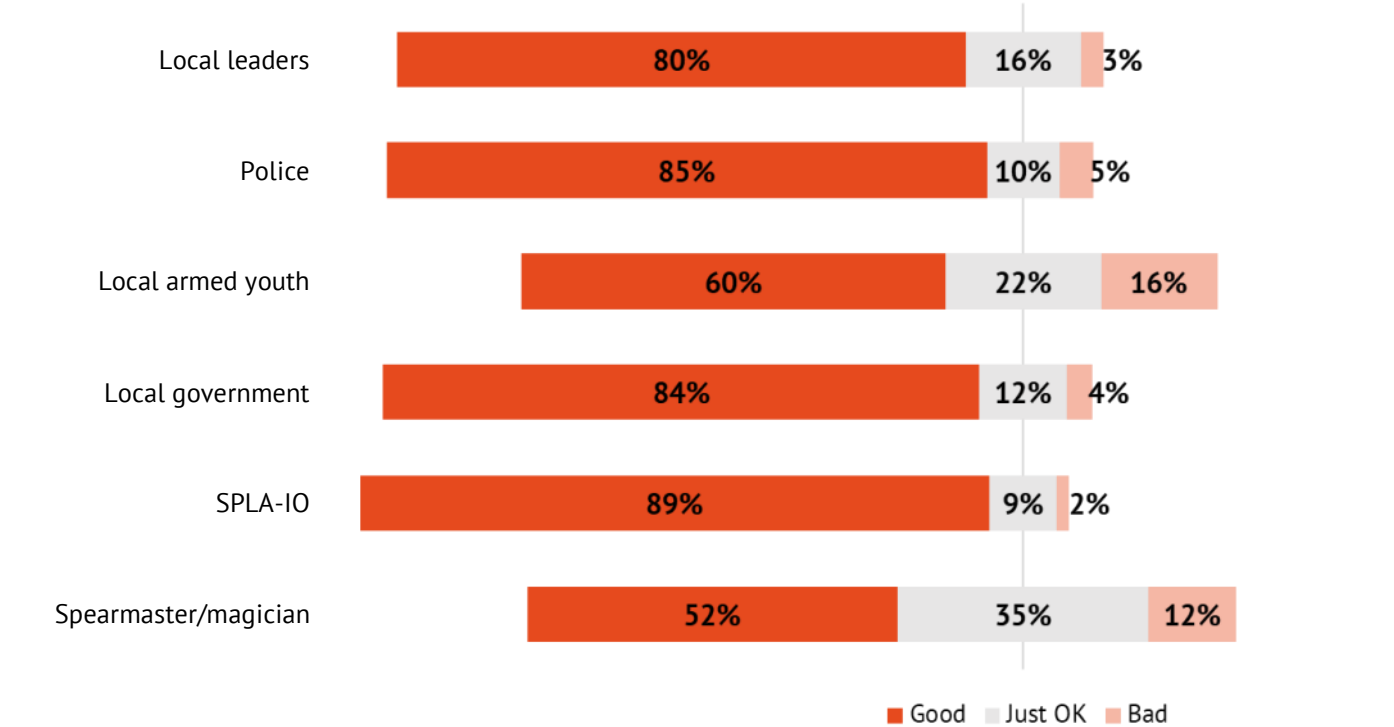
Respondents usually associate specific types of security incidents with particular security actors they deem most suitable in addressing such cases. When respondents

were asked to indicate who they would contact in imaginary cases of murder, sexual assault or sightings of unknown gunmen around their community, the police scored consistently high in all cases, followed by local community leaders (chiefs) and local government officials, generally showing little difference of response rates based on specific types of incidents (see graph on the previous page).

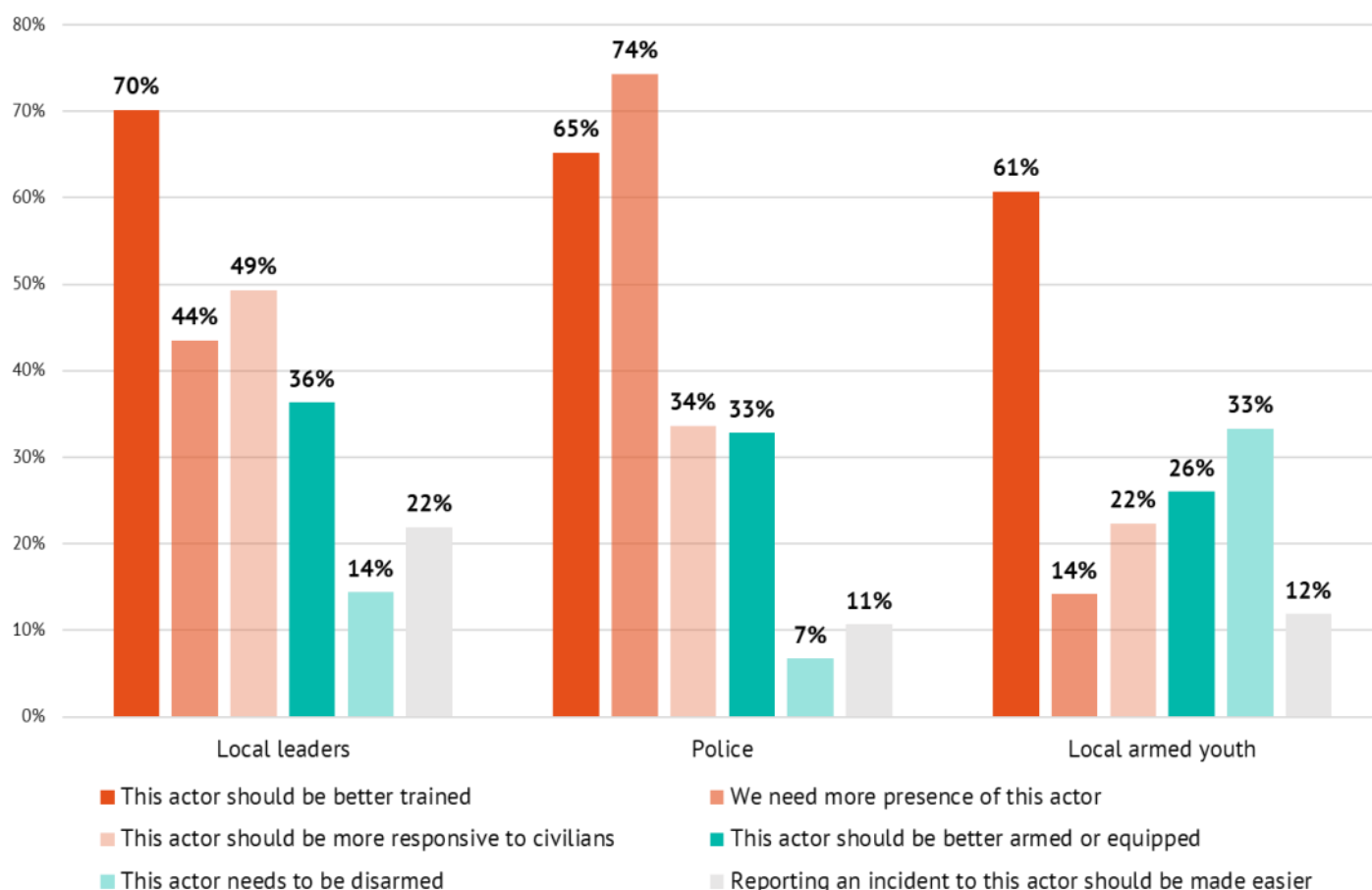
When respondents rated the most prominent security actors in Payinjiar (local government, police, SPLA-IO, local armed youth, UNMISS, paramilitary forces, chiefs), based on their perceived performance in providing security in the county, it turned out that most local security actors were considered to perform well, with SPLA-IO, the police, local government officials and chiefs receiving the highest appreciation rates (see figure below).

When asked how the three security actors most visibly present across Payinjiar (chiefs, police, armed youth) could improve their performance, enumerators responded by saying that local chiefs should be better trained (70% of respondents who indicated their presence), that they should be more responsive towards civilians (49%), that they need more presence of chiefs (44%), and that they should be better equipped (36%). Concerning the police, respondents thought that more police presence was needed (74%), that they should be better trained (65%), that they should be more responsive to civilians (34%), and they should be better armed or equipped (33%). Local armed youth on the other hand, were in need of better training according to 61% of respondents indicating their presence, while

### HOW DO YOU RATE THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE ACTORS IN PROVIDING SECURITY?



## WHAT IS NEEDED TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THESE ACTORS?



**33%** thought they should be disarmed (see the figure above).<sup>31</sup>

### Governance issues and how to address local insecurity

When asked to look to the future, almost two-thirds of all respondents (**62%**) indicated that poverty is the most likely factor to cause future conflicts in Jonglei State, followed by “poor governance at the national level” (**58%**), “tribalism or discrimination between ethnic groups” (**32%**), “high crime rates” (**28%**) and “cattle raiding and increasing dowry prices” (**26%**), among other less mentioned reasons.<sup>32</sup>

Local Payinjiar government authorities enjoy higher legitimacy among respondents than the national authorities in Juba, even when they are supposed to represent their area in the national capital, which also became apparent in responses to the statement about the impact of local elites who are based in Juba, on the security situation in Payinjiar. **49%** of all respondents agreed that “Local politicians and community leaders from this area who live in Juba are often creating community conflicts in their home area, or make them worse,” whereas **42%** was of the opinion that “Local politicians and community leaders from Payinjiar who live in Juba are helpful in preventing or resolving community conflicts.”<sup>33</sup> More than half of respondents (**58%**) did not agree that

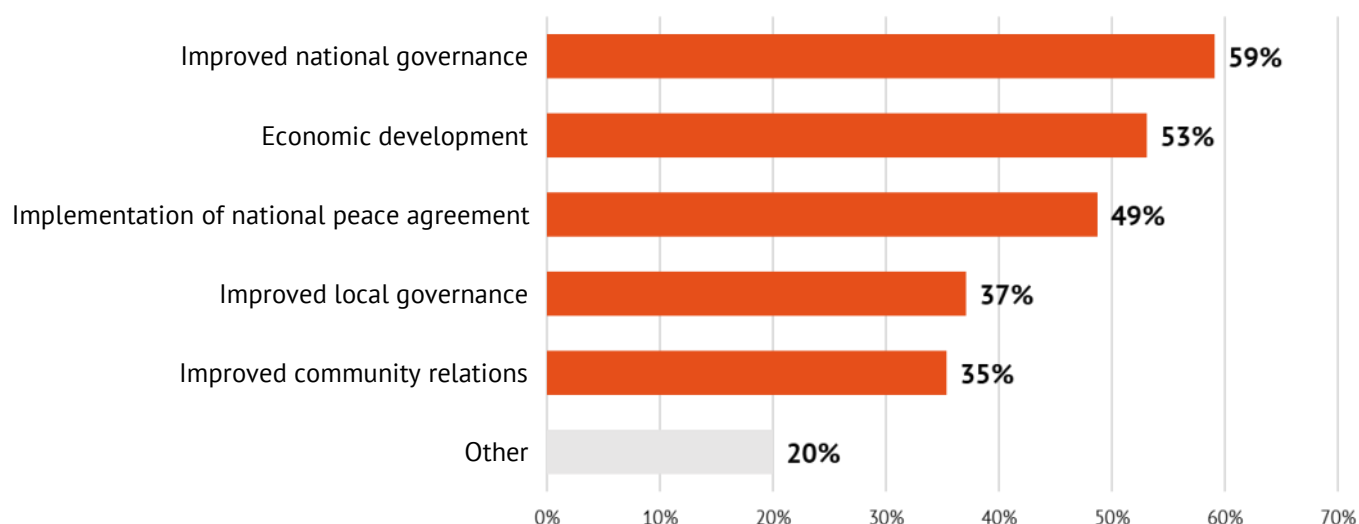
the national government in Juba “is taking effective steps to reduce violence,” while **41%** agreed with this statement.

A practical example that was mentioned by the participants to the validation workshop, was the current power vacuum in Payinjiar County, after the people of Payinjiar (represented by the chiefs) rejected the newly appointed Commissioner by the national government in Juba, nominated by the SPLA-IO leadership, and appointed their own candidate instead. An important local chief concluded: “The insecurity in Ganyliel is caused by politicians in Juba, they create contradictions among our youths, for example now we have appointed our own Commissioner, but the politicians in Juba are against it. The fighting in Thornhom [at the time of the workshop widespread blood feud and revenge killing was reported in one of Payinjiar’s payams, AQ] is a revenge to us, because I think politicians have a hand in this. We in Ganyliel are peace loving people, we manage the borders with our neighbours, like the peace agreement between Yirol and our people that came from us, people of Ganyliel because we share the same border with [Dinka from] Yirol.”

When formulating future expectations more positively (“What are the 3 most significant changes that need to happen to bring lasting peace to South Sudan?”), more than half of the respondents (**59%**) answered that “improved governance at the national level” was needed,



## WHAT CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO BRING LASTING PEACE TO SOUTH SUDAN? (N = 450)



followed by economic development (53%), implementation of the national peace agreement<sup>35</sup> (49%), “improved governance at the local level” (37%) and “improved community relations” (35%), see the figure above.<sup>36</sup>

The current unstable political situation is often mentioned as the main reason communities continue to (re)arm themselves: “our main problem is now the availability of guns [in the hands of civilians],<sup>37</sup> and it was Juba that has caused this, because if they did not fight among themselves, people would have not acquired arms as massively as they did. We are suffering as a result of Juba, I mean Salva Kiir and Riek Machar. They say that if the elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers. If the national government reigns peacefully and designs projects to engage local armed youth, the problem will be over.”

It is yet unclear what economic development in Payinjar will exactly look like, as the area’s economy and land use is still dominated by a small scale pastoralist lifestyle. However, many participants to the validation workshop argued that there is need for alternative job creation for youth in order to provide a different incentive to youth, away from raiding cattle and other criminal activities, as the example of an attending youth representative showed: “cattle raiding is caused by poverty, if the government would initiate an alternative livelihood program to engage the youths, they will abandon cattle raiding. I was once a cattle raider too, in July 2010 I went for cattle raiding but the former Commissioner of Payinjar county advised me that cattle raiding is not good. He explained to me that there are a lot of dangers connected to it, and I stopped it till now.<sup>38</sup> NGOs are doing a good job. What PAX has done to collect information from our people and share with us what they have in their minds is a great job that deserves much appreciation, but you need to inform other NGOs who are your friends in Juba and make them aware of these issues and see where they can help. Let them engage our youths on livelihood

activities.” The success of youth developing alternative livelihoods might also depend on a different approach of youth and their capacities within the local communities themselves: “youths of Payinjar are jobless because elders do not allow young men to initiate plans and have a voice in community affairs.”

When the national (R-ARCSS) and local (with neighboring Dinka communities in Lakes) peace agreements will hold, youth might be offered alternative employment opportunities away from cattle keeping, and when law enforcement actors are more accessible and accountable to communities, then it is hoped and expected that the situation will be more conducive to civilian disarmament campaigns than is currently the case. At the moment the pressures encouraging self-protection mechanisms are still considered too strong. Although there is sometimes confusion among community members about whether disarmament is a prerequisite for security, or the logical consequence of security being improved by other means (“the police and the local government will effectively control community security only when the arms are collected in the hands of civilians”).

Until then, respondents’ expectations on how the local security situation will develop over the next year are not very high: 30% thought security would likely become worse, 19% said it wouldn’t change and 10% believed the situation would improve (with the remaining 41% not risking any prediction). Respondents overwhelmingly feel that the results of this and future surveys should be actively shared with the community, primarily through “organizing community meetings with citizens, local authorities and security actors” (92% of respondents), by “organizing meetings with specific groups in society, like women, youth, or chiefs” (84%), or through publishing the results in a report (13%), among others lesser-mentioned options.

Participants to the multi-day data validation and community security dialogue in Ganyliel jointly identified five main security priorities most in need of addressing, based on the survey data and subsequent discussions: 1) flooding, 2) cattle raiding 3) revenge killing (dubbed by some “*the biggest Payinjar internal security challenge*”), 4) rape and sexual assault, and 5) forced marriages. Common understanding of threats and priorities helps to focus local peacebuilding efforts in the upcoming year, as well as the follow-up activities initiated by the Community Security Committee (COMSECCOM) on the basis of a joint action plan, which is agreed and supported by the local authorities and

other community representatives.

PAX is committed to continue conducting (bi-)annual rounds of survey collection and community engagement in the course of 2021-2023 at least, to generate additional insights into local security dynamics, to monitor how identified trends in local security provision develop over time, and to support the local follow-up activities undertaken by community representatives, with the aim of achieving sustainable results in improving the local security situation for communities across Payinjar County and its immediate neighbors.



*Participants to the data validation workshop and “Security is Everyone’s Business” community dialogue. Attendees included local government officials, security sector officials (police), community leaders and civil society representatives from media, church, women’s and youth groups (May 2021, Ganyliel)*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lower governmental administrative area, mostly consisting of a town or a number of adjacent villages or hamlets. The payam often serves as a basic point of logistical orientation for many (rural) South Sudanese.

<sup>2</sup> Three quarters of all collected surveys were collected in Greater Ganyliel, and a quarter in Greater Nyal.

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the survey methodology, please visit <https://protectionofcivilians.org/report/human-security-survey-methodology-south-sudan/>

<sup>4</sup> The median age in South Sudan is 18.6 years according to the CIA World Fact Book (<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/south-sudan/>). By excluding respondents below 16 years of age, the average age in our sample is necessarily much higher.

<sup>5</sup> 4% of all women respondents claimed they were widowed, as did 1% of men. Almost half (48%) of all respondents indicated that the household they belong to is headed by a woman, while 61% of all female respondents claimed to be the head of their household.

<sup>6</sup> More than a quarter of respondents (28%) said that their own livelihood did not comprise the main livelihood of their household. Most of these respondents (80%) claimed that their household relies on aid from NGOs or the UN.

<sup>7</sup> When asked on what sources they based their response, 83% of respondents claimed this was based on their own experiences, while 37% mentioned that this was what people around them were saying, and 28% said that this was what local leaders were saying, among other options, as this was a multiple choice question.

<sup>8</sup> Asked to respondents who claimed their security situation worsened in the last 12 months in 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents could pick more than one response option with this question, so the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

<sup>11</sup> Idem.

<sup>12</sup> The floods in Payinjar were also reported in national media around the time of field data collection: “*Flood victims in Unity still waiting for assistance*” (Eye Radio, 13-09-2020) and “*IRNA Report: Payinjar County, Unity State*” (IRNA, 01-07-2020).

<sup>13</sup> Respondents could pick more than one response option with this question, so the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>14</sup> Idem.

<sup>15</sup> As a reported incident can involve more than one victim, the sum of percentages of alleged victims exceeds 100%.

<sup>16</sup> Respondents could pick more than one response option with this question, so the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>17</sup> Of the remaining respondents who did not seek external assistance, 51% said they did not do so because they “*did not believe anyone could help me resolve the issue.*”

<sup>18</sup> For this question, respondents were allowed multiple answers. As a result, the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>19</sup> Idem.

<sup>20</sup> Idem.

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> Idem.

<sup>23</sup> For this question, respondents were allowed multiple answers. As a result, the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>24</sup> Idem.

<sup>25</sup> Since South Sudan spiraled into conflict in December 2013 and the ruling SPLM/A split into two parts, the SPLA/M-In Government and the SPLA-In Opposition, Payinjiar County has been controlled by SPLA-In Opposition or SPLA-IO. After the R-ARCSS peace agreement was signed in September 2018, the two sides have ceased mutual hostilities and are now forming a transitional government in Juba.

<sup>26</sup> For this question, respondents were allowed multiple answers. As a result the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>27</sup> Idem.

<sup>28</sup> In 2018, 87% agreed to this statement.

<sup>29</sup> Women respondents had a preference for security forces recruited from outside their own community (55% versus 43% preferring local recruits), while male respondents had a slight preference for security forces recruited from the local community itself (53% versus 44% preferring external recruits).

<sup>30</sup> In 2018, 71% of respondents preferred dispute resolution be handled by chiefs.

<sup>31</sup> For this question, respondents were allowed multiple answers. As a result the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>32</sup> Idem.

<sup>33</sup> Participants to the data validation meeting in Ganyiel also agreed in majority that local elites and politicians based in Juba often create conflicts or make them worse.

<sup>34</sup> [\*“SPLM-IO nominated commissioner of Panyijiar County rejected by community”\*](#) (Radio Tamazuj, 18-06-2021).

<sup>35</sup> The national peace agreement meant here is the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), which was signed in September 2018 by the national government and the main armed opposition (SPLA-IO).

<sup>36</sup> For this question, respondents were allowed to give three answers. As a result the sum of the responses exceeds 100%.

<sup>37</sup> However, half of all respondents did not agree that it was too easy to buy new weapons in their payam, and only 28% agreed with the statement.

<sup>38</sup> The dangers notwithstanding, cattle raiding still has an element of tribal competition and prestige surrounding it; a sizeable minority of 41% of all respondents agreed that “*a young man who raids lots of cattle from a neighboring community is to be respected,*” with 52% disagreeing.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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**Peace. Are you in?**

**PAX**