Transformational Leadership As A Catalyst For Enhancing Gender Equality And Women's Representation In Public Administration: Opportunities For Increased Access And Involvement In South Sudan

Dr. Angelina Mattijo Bazugba

Associate Professor, School Of Social And Economic Studies, And Director Of Ntli, University Of Juba

Abstract

The Gender Equality in Public Administration Study was carried at the National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI) of the University of Juba in partnership with the Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare and UNDP South Sudan. The Study employed UNDP's global GEPA initiative framework and UNDP-OECD Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality in Public Life. which consists of four pillars, namely,1) Institutional and governance frameworks for gender equality and mainstreaming; 2) Gender-sensitive practices in parliaments; 3) Gender-sensitive public employment systems; 4) Gender-sensitive practices in the judiciary. Based on South Sudan context and the systems alreadyestablished, some key aspects of the UNDP-OECD tool with particular emphasis on Pillars (1) and (3) were adopted. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection that include surveys, face-to-face interviews, consultation workshops and focus group discussions were used to reach out to gender focal persons from all government institutions (ministries, commissions and parastatal organizations), organized forces, Academia and Civic groups that include Faith Based Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and Disability Persons Organisations.The collated information was analysed using SPSS and interpretation provided. The studyfound the existence of considerable gender differentials in terms of gender rights, access to humanrights and access to justice. Gender inequality and Sexual Gender-Based Violence are widespread and mostly intensified by cultural norms and insecurity caused by interstate and intracommunal conflicts. Gender equality and women's access, involvement and representation in Public Administration are linked to multiple structural and functional constraints which differ across sectors in South Sudan. Analysis from this study, clearly underlines that participation and access to formal political power structures is impeded by inherent gender imbalance in institutionalstructures, unequal power sharing, socio-economic context, culture, ideological and psychologicalfactors, which remain sticky, normalized and increasingly accepted as part of life. From the foregoing, it is imperative that directed policy initiatives and legal framework be established to address the issues. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan should conduct a review of the legislative and policy framework to integrate the minimum of 35% quotas for womenin all public administration (National Gender Policy; National Strategic Plan Framework; LabourAct, Civil Service Act and Public Service Regulations);

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Public Administration, Transformative Leadership and Women's Representation*

I.   Introduction

Many studies have shown that when women take leadership roles in public administrations, governments are more responsive and accountable, the quality of public services delivered is improved, and public trust and confidence in state organizations is significantly boosted. Achieving this would require a multifaceted approach that meaningfully acknowledges women's plights, seeks to interrogate and unlearn patriarchal and misogynistic sentiments that have seepedinto our society and put into place significant policies that not only encourage women's participation but additionally ensures that there are true consequences for those that are violent towards women across board. Although the Government of South Sudan has worked tremendouslyhard to ensure at least 35% gender quota is provided in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and subsequently enshrined into the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS 2011) as amended, the implementation continueto be a daunting task. Correspondingly, relentless calls for adherence to it during appointment andrecruitment of women in various decision-making levels at national and state levels are yet to yield the intended results. This paper analyzes the current status of gender equality in public administration in the country and argues that although gender quotas are constitutionally enshrined, there is continued evidence of

rhetorical support.

The Public Administration and new political institutions are deeply permeated with traditional norms and power dynamics that blunt the reformist potential of quotas and reinforce the gender status quo. Whereas policy can easily be adopted, implementation is not always straight forward. Rule-breaking and rule bending persevere due to deep-seated historic, cultural, and socio- economic obstacles undermining women's presence public spheres. Not only does it delay the attainment of gender equality which is central to development, but it undercuts the equitable distribution of resources and power.[1]Unquestionably, women's underrepresentation and limited participation in public administration is extremely dangerous as it perpetuates a stereotypical beliefthat women are inept and is indeed detrimental to their recognition as autonomous, capable humanbeings who can lead.

This paper provides findings from the Study conducted in South Sudan in 2021 and 2022 and recommends Transformational Leadership (TL) as a Game Changer to increase women's numerical representation. It begins by providing an overview of Gender Equality in South Sudan,followed by explaining the importance of the Study and how it was carried out, then provide the key findings, conclusion and recommendations for policy and programmes. In doing so, it offers an in-depth understanding of the current situation, progress made, successes and challenges and more importantly, the progress of institutional and governance frameworks on mainstreaming gender equality established in the country.

II.   GEPA Study: Meaning, Implications And Methodology

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, armed conflict continues to be a major obstacle to the fulfilment of women's rights and gender equality.In 2016, more countries including South Sudan, experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years. It has been established that the gendered impact of conflict increases the levels ofsexual and gender-based violence, marginalization, and discrimination in varied formsexperienced by girls, young women and women. In addition, research shows that a state's level ofgender equality can serve as a predictor of armed conflict, whether measuring conflict between states or within states. Therefore, conflict prevention, sustainable peace, gender equality, and women's empowerment are inextricably linked. Yet, while there is consensus that gender equalityis central to any socio-economic and political development, limited efforts have been made to understand the institutional environment.

Making institution more sensitive to gender requires a better understanding of both numerical representation and institutional environment in which formal and informal policies, practices andprocedures interact (See Bazugba 2014)[2]. In the process, the institutional norms often reinforce gender inequalities and gender-based stereotypes, which may undermine the attainment of gender equality (OECD).[3] Undeniably, improving gender equality would result to better and informed decision-making processes and better access of women to education, health services, improved quality of human capital, higher productivity, higher labor purchasing power, access to credit andimproved economic resilience among others.

It is within that context that the Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) Study was carried out by the National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI) at the University of Jubain partnership with the Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) and UNDP SouthSudan. The Study employed UNDP's global GEPA initiative framework and UNDP-OECD Toolkit for *Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality in Public Life.* which consists of four pillars, namely, 1*) Institutional and governance frameworks for gender equality and mainstreaming; 2) Gender-sensitive practices in parliaments; 3) Gender-sensitive public employment systems; 4) Gender-sensitive practices in the judiciary.* Based on South Sudan contextand the systems already established, some key aspects of the UNDP-OECD tool with particular emphasis on Pillars (1) and (3) were adopted.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection that include surveys, face-to-face interviews, consultation workshops and focus group discussions were used to reach out to genderfocal persons from all government institutions (ministries, commissions and parastatalorganizations), organized forces, Academia and Civic groups that include Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Disability Persons Organisations(DPOs). The collated information was analysed using SPSS and interpretation provided.

Key Findings
National Gender Equality Context

The attainment of a fair and non-biased gender equality framework remains a challenge in South Sudan and Africa in general.[4] The numerous conflicts and peculiar insecurity situation in the country constrict financial resources that could have been used for development programmes. Instead, the meagre resources are directed towards humanitarian assistance. In 2020, communitieswere hit hard by the triple shock of intensified conflict and sub-national violence, a second consecutive year of major flooding, and the impacts of COVID-19, worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. The living standards deteriorated as the pandemic disrupted livelihoods (UNDP and UoJ 2020).[5]

In terms of socio- economic development, surveys conducted in June 2020 showed that 51.2% of

respondents had reduced earnings from their main income source; and 50.7% of the respondents reported reduced incomes by October 2020.[6] Poverty is endemic and widespread with at least 80 percent of the 13.3 million population live below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics 2010). Women, in particular female headed households make up to 51.6% of the poor.[8] With an economic annual growth rate of 3.2% by 2018/2019 and total fertility rate of 7, the population is predominantly young with the age group under 30 years accounting for about 75%.[i] With a highlevel of illiteracy 73% for men and 84% for women, the unemployment rate in South Sudan remained unchanged at 11.50% since 2016 (UNOCHA 2016/2017).[ii] Those in non-wage employment in the agriculture sector account for 61 percent of the employed. Only a minority of workers enjoy formal salaried employment (13%) or employment in the tertiary sector (19%).[iii] Poverty levels are expected to remain extremely high, with about 82 percent of the population in South Sudan below the USD1.90 poverty line (2011 purchasing power parity).[iv] The insecurity situation and the decline in global oil prices since 2016 have continued to negatively affect the economy, leading to high (50 percent) youth and women unemployment.

In health sector, one primary health center serves an average of 50,000 people. Only 40 percent of nutrition treatment centers have access to safe water, a gap that puts more vulnerable people, particularly women, boys and girls, at risk of malnutrition and disease. The life expectancy at birthfor both sexes is 56.3 years. Despite improvements in some health outcomes, the majority of women (87%) deliver their babies at home. Only about one in five childbirths involves a skilled health care worker. Family planning uptake is low (contraceptive prevalence rate is 4.5% for all methods and 1.7% for modern methods).[v]

There are also considerable gender differentials in terms of gender rights, access to human rights and access to justice. Gender inequality and Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) are widespread and mostly intensified by cultural norms and insecurity caused by interstate and intracommunal conflicts. For example, the International Rescue Committee Study (2017) reported that65% of women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime in Bentiu, Juba and Lakes States. The 2019 GBV Information Management System data analysis indicates that 54% of the reported incidents suffered intimate partner violence while 33% were from a non- partner and some primarily during attacks or raids. The AIDS epidemic continues to affect females disproportionately compared to males. National HIV estimates (2021) shows that the adult HIV prevalence is estimated at 2.1% (1.6% among males and 2.5% among females), with women and adolescent girls constituting 64% of the most affected group. This rate is expected to increase dueto the low levels of awareness on HIV/AIDS and prevailing high-risk behaviors such as multiple concurrent sexual partners, polygamy, non-use of condom, and other factors such as low school enrolment and poverty.[vi]

Equally, UNFPA South Sudan report (2020) indicates that there was an increase in the reported incidents of physical assault in the first three months of 2020 following the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic.[vii] Sexual exploitation and abuse, among young girls forced to be out of school dueto dowry perseveres. Over 40% of girls are married off under 18 years.[viii] resulting to increasedrate of teenage pregnancies (300/1,000 for girls aged 15-19). Still, most cases remain underreported due to inadequate information on referral pathway, fear of revenge from perpetrators, stigma surrounding sexual violence and possible HIV/AIDS transmissions. In termsof water, sanitation and health (WASH) facilities, long distance to schools and extra burden fromdomestic chores especially for adolescent girls, result into high school dropout rate. A large part of the South Sudan population is semi-nomadic and this prevents them from attending formal schooling.

Women's Participation and Representation in Public Spheres

Gender equality and women's access, involvement and representation in Public Administration are linked to multiple structural and functional constraints which differ across sectors in South Sudan. Analysis from this study, clearly underlines that participation and access to formal politicalpower structures is impeded by inherent gender imbalance in institutional structures, unequal power sharing, socio-economic context, culture, ideological and psychological factors, which remain sticky, normalised and increasingly accepted as part of life. Yet while the legal frameworkand institutional mechanisms put in place are rich, implementation remains tricky or partially complied in the absence of independent oversight and enforcement bodies. There persist rule- bending and remembrance of old norms denting the progress towards gender equality and women'spresence in decision-making in political and public administration.[7]

Legal and Institutional Framework for GEPA

Following the independence in 2011, the Republic Government of South Sudan adopted different strategic and special measures to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. Althoughthe country was plunged back into prolonged period of conflict for some years, resulting to untoldimpact on institutions and governance, this did not deter its efforts of curbing discriminatory practices. Like other low- and middle-income

countries, South Sudan recognizes the pivotal importance of addressing gender equality and has been mainstreamed at various levels in an effortto contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Its clear visionfor gender equality is anchored in key government documents which are aligned to the international and regional benchmarks such as the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially Goal 5 on gender equality; the Maputo Protocol, the African Union and East African Community Gender Policies.

There is a broadly comprehensive legal and policy framework for GEPA (through the TCSS (2011as Amended), R-ARCSS and key pieces of national legislation), together with a solid National Gender Policy and Strategic Plan and Revised National Development Strategy 2021-2024. However, gaps remain in the legal framework in relation to GEPA, and considerable shortfalls inits implementation. The National Gender Policy (2013) includes a comprehensive intergovernmental gender machinery at national and state levels to coordinate gendermainstreaming. Still, resources are a major challenge, with less than 0.3% of the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW), and a high level of dependence on donor funding for GEPA programmes (MGCSW Strategic Plan 2022; MoF 2022).

The Labour Act (2017) and Civil Service Act (2011) are progressive in ensuring the rights of bothmen and women employees are observed at work place. The Local Government Act (2011) and Political Parties Act (2012) too, have provisions that are in line with the TCSS and meetinternational standards and good practices. Nevertheless, gaps remain. For example, ILO Conventions relating to family commitments and maternity pay are yet to be ratified. There is alsocurrently no legal mechanism to enforce the use of gender quotas, for example in recruitment andpromotion lists in the public service, there is a need to intensify sensitization and awareness to reduce gender stereotypes and biases in education and the labour market and to encourage fathersto take parental leave, whether on salaried jobs or self-employment to promote the proportion of women in management. Equally, the TCSS recognizes the primacy of customary laws (Article 5),which contradicts the statutory laws. This in most cases does not give women justice.

There are various gender equality monitoring processes but these need to be consolidated and strengthened, including with reference to GEPA (where there is no gender-disaggregated databasefor tracking women's representation (including implementation of the minimum 35% threshold).

The Women Empowerment Bill is under finalization,[8] but a key gap is the absence of an adequate independent accountability and oversight mechanisms to enforce and sanction parties and institutions for non-implementation of 35% gender quotas. The Bill proposes the establishment ofauthority to investigate the lack of non-compliance but direct such petition to the Supreme Court.

Gender mainstreaming in the Public Sector

There are a series of cross-government and sectoral gender mainstreaming mechanisms with focalpersons in all key institutions and a range of coordination mechanisms. However, limited financialand human resources are key factors constraining mainstreaming of gender in public bodies. Over

81.5 % of public institutions consulted lack funding to implement gender equality programmes. Figure 1 shows that there are institutions that received funding for gender mainstreaming but mostof them are uncertain about the exact amount of funding allocated, except the 6 institutions out of265 institutions (which have received total a sum of SSP 119,105,495 in the previous financial year 2021/2022 for the gender mainstreaming activities). Resources are needed for sector specificgender mainstreaming activities and capacity building of staff who are to support other sectors There is also limited understanding, negative perception and lack of knowledge on gender mainstreaming.

Fig 1: Factors constraining gender mainstreaming in policies and plans
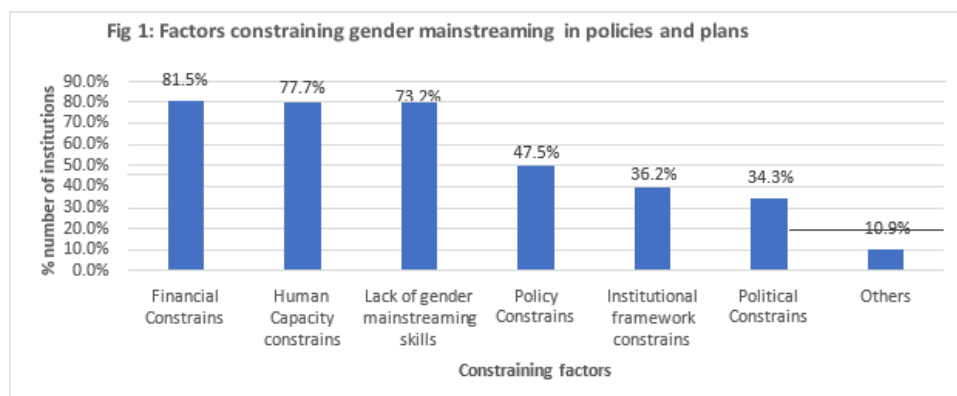
Where considered, gender analysis is often taken as an ad hoc measure (mainly funded by donors)and not yet systematic. Some ministries like Agriculture and Food Security and Humanitarian andDisaster Management have been mainstreaming gender in their programmes, but gender- responsive budgeting (GRB) is yet to be formally introduced and systematized at national and statelevels.[9]

Gender Equality and Women's Participation in Public Administration
✓ There is systematic under-representation of women and gender inequality in the public sector:Out of the States/Administrative Areas public workforce of 77,874 (excluding the South SudanPeople's Defense Force (SSPDF), women constitute only 32.3%;
✓ Most of the women in the public administration have low educational qualifications: 53.2 % have no educational qualifications, and only 19.7% of civil servants with postgraduate qualifications are female;
✓ Efforts to appoint one third of judges as female have not been sustainable, with a large proportion opting to leave the sector to low/delayed payment of wages and salaries;
✓ There is limited documentation and inadequate data of women's representation in the securitysector which undercut women, peace and security initiatives requiring their participation in conflict resolution and peace building, prevention of forms of violence against women and girls; and advocate for their increased access to justice and health services;

Other than women parliamentarians,[10] women are under-represented in almost all decision-making positions in public administrations in States/Administrative Areas of South Sudan as shown in Table 1:
✓ At gubernatorial level, there is only one female out of 10 state governors (although 3 out of10 deputies). All the three Chief Administrators are male.
✓ Similarly, there is low proportion of women appointed as Advisors and CountyCommissioners. Out of 64 State Advisors, only 9 (14.1%) are female.
✓ At the State and Administrative Areas, out of 180 ministers/executive level, womenconstitute only 20%, falling short of the 35% quota.
✓ All the 13 State and Administrative Secretary Generals are male, while female are only 5(9.4%) out of 53 Chairpersons of Commissions; and 8 out of 44 deputy Chairpersons).
✓ Out of 83 county Commissioners, only 2 (2.4%) are female, while only 12 (3.5%) out of 339 Payam Administrators are female.[11]
✓ Out of the 13 Town Mayors in the ten state plus three administrative areas, only 2 (15.4%)are female.
✓ Women hold 78 (9.6%) of the 811 top executive positions in the ten states and threeadministrative areas.
✓ Women hold 333 (16.4%) of the 2,030 top civil service positions. Only 32 (11.2 %) of 254Director Generals are women, and 149 (16 %) of 932 Directors are women, while 144 (19.1%) of the deputy Directors are women and 8 (14%) of 57 Executive Directors are women.
✓ In the public universities, women only occupy 6 % of top decision-making positions.

Table 1: Senior Executive decision-making appointments

Positions in public service	Sex				Total(N)
	Male		Female		
	Number	%	Number	%	
Governors	9	90.0	1	10.0	10
Deputy Governors	6	66.7	3	33.3	9
Chief Administrators	3	100	0	0.0	3
State Advisors	55	85.9	9	14.1	64
Ministers	144	80.0	36	20.0	180
State Secretary Generals	13	100	0	0.0	13
Chairpersons of Commission	48	90.6	5	9.4	53
Deputy Chairpersons of Commission	36	81.8	8	18.2	44
County Commissioners	81	97.6	2	2.4	83
Payam Administrators	327	96.5	12	3.5	339
Town Mayors	11	84.6	2	15.4	13
Director Generals	254	88.8	32	11.2	286
Executive Directors	49	86.0	8	14.0	57
Directors	783	84.0	149	16.0	932
Deputy Directors	611	80.9	144	19.1	755
Total	**2,430**	**85.5**	**411**	**14.5**	**2,841**

In the parliaments of the ten state plus three administrative area, only 10 and 1 administrative areahave speakers of the parliament.
✓ 4 (36%) of the 11 speakers of the parliament are women, this is the only position where women reach the 35%

quota, although 5 (62.5%) out of 8 deputies are women.
✓ 1 (5.6%) of the 18 chief whips are women and 3 (23.1%) out the 13 clerks of the parliament are women.
✓ 28 (27.7%) of the 101 chairpersons of specialize parliamentary committees are female, although 38 (40.4%) of the 94 deputies are women.
✓ 351 (30.6%) of the 1,147 members of the parliament are women.
✓ Women hold 74 (31.1%) of the 238 top parliamentary positions in the ten states and three administrative areas.
✓ A lack of political will to ensure the 35% quota in political appointments as well as women's advancement and participation in decision-making structures on the side of all parties to the R-ARCSS has a negative bearing in influencing the enactment and implementation of gender-responsive policies. Measures to promote women's advancement, candidacy and leadership and sanctions for non-compliance are yet to be established.

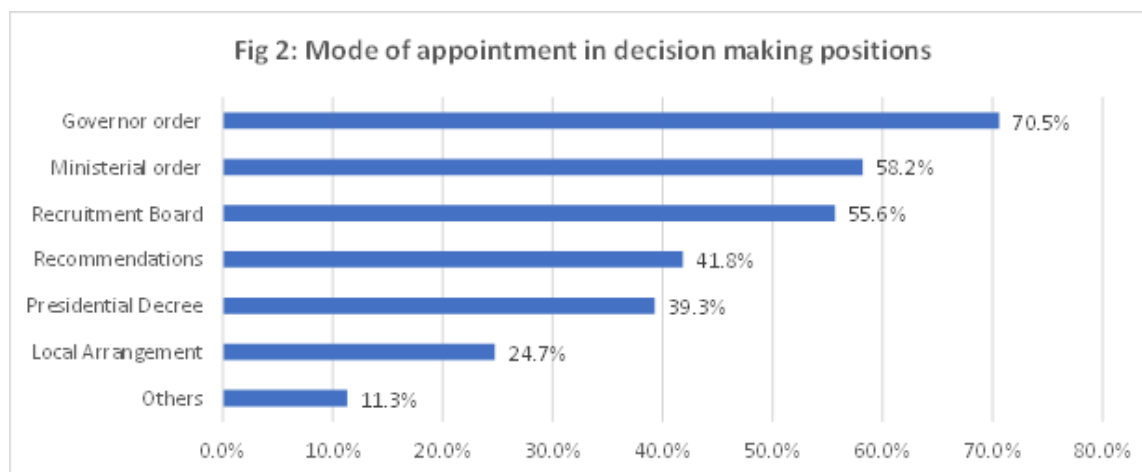**Table 2: Size of the Public Administration by sex and category**

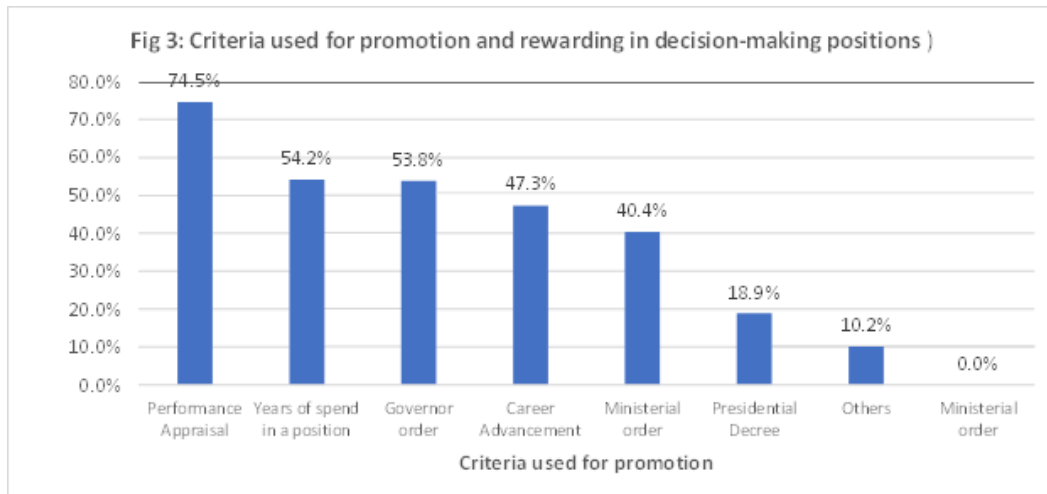| Type of employees	Female	Male	Total (N)
Executive (Town Mayors, Payam Administrators, County Commissioners, Deputy Chairpersons, Chairpersons, State Secretary General, Deputy Ministers, Ministers, State Advisors and Governors)	78 (9.6%)	733 (90.4%)	811
Parliament (Legislative Assembly)	351 (30.6%)	796 (69.4%)	1,147
Civil Service	24,678 (32.5%)	51,149 (67.5%)	75,827
Judiciary and Legal Service	12 (13.4%)	77 (86.6%)	89
Total	**25,119 (32.3%)**	**52,755 (67.7%)**	**77,874**

In the Judiciary and Legal System at the ten states and three administrative areas:
✓ 8 (14.8%) of the 54 legal advisors are female.
✓ At the High Court, there are 4 (11%) female judges out of the 36 judges. Only 1 female first judge of the 15 first high judges, 2 females second judges of the 13 second high courtjudges and 1 female third high court judge of the 8 third high court judges

Yet, some of those who qualify are often reluctant to apply for government jobs because of negative perception and attitude toward women holding public positions; lack of qualifications, family obligations and lack of good incentives and salaries. Although the Labour Act (2017) provides for maternity and paternity leave periods, there is concern on the absence of entitlementto public income support for child care and funding to promote work-life balance measures at senior management levels compared to low-level and low-income groups of employees. Other concerns include delay in the payment of salaries, lack of child care facilities, adequate funding for training and capacity building and insufficient reporting channels for incidences of sexual harassment and gender-biased behaviour.
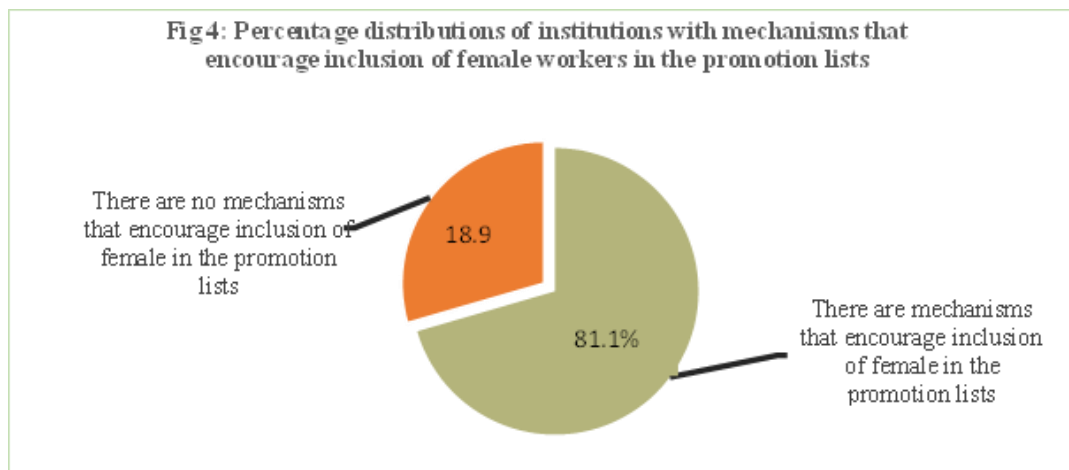
Gender Equality in Human Resource Management: This include recruitment, promotion, professional development and flexible working environment. The current recruitment procedures,appointment mechanisms, promotions system and retention plans, plus the absence of mentoring schemes, together with poor working conditions, undermine the attainment of gender equality in the public administration.

Fig 2: Mode of appointment in decision making positions

Category	Percentage
Governor order	70.5%
Ministerial order	58.2%
Recruitment Board	55.6%
Recommendations	41.8%
Presidential Decree	39.3%
Local Arrangement	24.7%
Others	11.3%

Fig 3: Criteria used for promotion and rewarding in decision-making positions)

Gender norms and workplace harassment: Discrimination, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and harassment among others are key issues affecting women in the public administration. There are a range of cross-party bodies such as women's parliamentary caucuses, sub-cluster meetings and networks with civic groups, which if incessantly well-equipped can help to highlight discriminatory behaviors and practices.

GEPA Initiatives: There are a range of GEPA initiatives including recruitment policies and guidelines. Over 81.1% of the public institutions involved in the Study said that there are mechanisms in place that encourage the inclusion of women in the promotion list indicated below, but more effort is needed in many areas including gender-responsive budgeting, gender analysis and monitoring, and gender–sensitive public sector employment practices in all sectors including security and Judiciary. In addition to policy regulations, equipping women with transformational leadership skills is arguably a key ingredient for national building. To understand how TL can bea transform in the public administration.

Fig 4: Percentage distributions of institutions with mechanisms that encourage inclusion of female workers in the promotion lists

Transformational Leadership as a Game Changer: What lessons can be learned from the NTLI beneficiaries?12

Bass (1998) explained four dimensions of Transformational Leadership as:

1) **Charismatic leadership/Idealized influence** - Leaders act as strong role models with the ability to walk the talk, knowledgeable and experienced, visionary with the ability to share it with others, and instill pride and faith in followers by overcoming challenges;

2) **Inspirational motivation** - Inspiring and empowering followers to enthusiastically accept and pursue challenging goals and a mission;

3) **Individualized consideration -** Respect followers and give them special attention, understand each individual and treat them appropriately, and recognize each one's unique needs;

4) **Intellectual stimulation** – ability to listen carefully to team members, be open to new ideas, articulate them and encourage followers to rethink their conventional practice and ideas.

The TL place value on the development of a clear vision which fosters innovation, inspires and motivates

their followers to pursue it (Anderson and King 1993). This way enhances followers' confidence and skills to devise innovative responses, creativity and ability to take risks and can facilitate the changeover processes in organizations/institutions (Howell & Avolio, 1989). However, if Transformational Leaders are left unchecked, they could become exploitative, self- serving, manipulative and ignore common goals.

After conducting training for 6 years (2016-2022) NTLI carried out an impact study to assess change in the lives of the beneficiaries. Overall, NTLI training and pedagogy show that TL has significantly increased the level of awareness on women' rights, confidence and ability tocommunicate and engage in leadership at various levels. This include the knowledge about their rights provided in the legal framework and ARCSS.

For example, 90% of respondents mentioned that the *"35% gender quotas was not implemented in the appointment of leaders in their states and counties; and there are some women groups thatsubmitted petition to their party leaders and governors questioning the non-implementation of gender quotas."*

The knowledge of gender provisions and ability to question the non-implementation indicates how dissemination of peace agreement, increased awareness of gender rights and transformation had taken place at individual and community levels.

The transformational leadership trainings have been successfully delivered to women fromnational and grassroots levels irrespective of their education, experience or cultural background. The training provided platform for dialogue, interaction and experience sharing which led to establishment of networks for future linkages and support. *Over 55% of the training beneficiariesconfirmed that they had joined political parties after attending the transformational leadership training. Many cited that the transformational leadership had challenged their mindsets and madethem courageous to withstand resistance and backlashes often undermining women's access to political parties. Other respondents (94%) believed that women with the same qualifications as men could do just as good job in politics.*

Findings indicate that Civic engagement amongst respondents was considerably high. A total of 56% of the female respondents were members of Community Based Organisations; Faith Groups;women associations, CSOs, village committees and political parties. This suggest that various training and sensitization had significantly contributed to an increased knowledge on the importance of teamwork, networking and enrollment in community groups. Some of the women leaders who held *political positions were directly affiliated with political parties. For example, one of the respondents interviewed was the financial secretary of United Democratic Forum; whilethe other interviewee was the Deputy Chairperson of the Democratic Change Party (SPLM - Democratic Change). The later self-identified herself as being the highest-ranking woman acrossall sixteen political parties in South Sudan. Despite the enormous challenges, she believed that being a role model could help to inspire more women to join political arena and transform the patriarchal culture embedded in institutions of political recruitment.*

Whereas both men and women respondents had incredibly progressive views regarding women involvement in peace and security; 93% of women's views were slightly more optimistic than men's views in that they believed women's participation in peacebuilding could improve the results of peace implementation. There has also been a change in attitude towards women and girls' participation in leadership at the community level and on issues related to peace and security,prevention of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices such as forced marriages and lack of property ownership and control of resources including land:

o *93% of respondents believed that women's participation in peacebuilding can make the peace process more likely to last.*
o *74% of respondents believed that women make 'better' political leaders than men. Out of those interviewed 62% were male, while 81% female.*
o *74% of respondents believed that there will be a female President of South Sudan in their lifetime while o*ver *70% of respondents stated that their areas had enough women 'qualified'to hold office. The prospective women leaders were from diverse, academic and professional backgrounds- regions, age groups and disabilities.*

By integrating Economic Empowerment skills in the Transformational leadership training womenvoices were promoted and were able to embark on viable economic activities and support their families. Results indicate that apart from the 13% of respondents who were employed by the government, the rest of the respondents were either self-employed or sought employment in informal sectors and service industries that include restaurants, market and house-keeping. Other were involved in brewing of local alcohol and subsistence farming to meet various family obligations. Despite the fact the majority of respondents' opinions on whether women should participate in politics were positive, a few said that there was a need to continue building their leadership skills.

Challenges undercutting the success of Women in Leadership
There are both internal and external factor constraining success and presence of women in leadership. These factors are not exclusive to Transformational Leaders but affect all women in leadership or aspirants: 1) **Women's own internal fear - 'I fear syndrome'** (the fear of lack of support, fear of failure and fear of rebuttal

by male peers). The Patriarchal cultural norms remain deeply embedded in the institutions of political recruitment and local government structures. Women join the political parties at a time when the rules of the game have been predetermined bythe founders who are men in most cases. To be able to challenge the norms, women need time to learn, associate with and form strong linkages. Otherwise as new members, women may easily besidelined, ignored or assigned to the junior positions or given service related responsibilities whichwill limit their level of participation and engagement with party actors.

The internal fear can be overcome by building capacity of women in transformational leadership, equipping women with lobbying and advocacy skills; women rights and advocate for unified voice.Women could also identify male champions within parties that will buy in their gender agenda andadvocate for increased women's presence and representation. The government and partners could organise experience sharing programmes/ or cross visits to other countries for learning purposes. Donors should support the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) to identify negative social norms and harmful customary and traditional practices that undermine the participation and protection of women and girl's rights.

2) Societal norms that discourage women from rising to the top or the lack of support from organizations or family. It has been found that politically ambitious women remain ridiculed and challenged about their capacities to handle both political office and their primary obligations as mothers and wives (Bazugba 2014: p.75) Many times women leaders have had to deal with reactions to their leadership which are deeply rooted in gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes dictate that a woman even in leadership should be warm, nurturing, caring and cooperative. Theyare also expected to balance work-family life and manage their homes, as wives, mothers, daughters, and care givers combined with their roles in public sphere. While these are gender stereotypes, I argue that such higher expectations, trust bestowed upon them, hard-working and ability to show higher levels of performance and when combined with leadership, can bring transformation in institutions.

Enduring negative perceptions and attitude about women in politics: There is a general perception that women's place is in the private while male's space is in the public. As a result, there is minimum appreciation of the role women play in public spheres. Their presence in publictend to provoke gender role reversal, fear of intimidation, insecurities and gender-based violence.In 2010 elections, a name of one female candidate contesting for geographical constituency was replaced by a name of a male candidate in the county committee. After being alerted, she went back to her fellow women who united and referred the matter to the traditional leaders. A letter was written to the Governor regarding the malpractices and potential sources of corruption. Sincethe process had progressed, it was too late to remove the name of the male candidate. The femalecandidate opted to stand in election as a private candidate and was voted in as the member of the National Legislative Assembly. The level of aggressiveness, perseverance and confidence showedby this member of parliament proved that women are able to compete with men and lead the community if supported.

In 2021, as political parties were recruiting female candidates to join their parties, many women reported cases of abuse by their husbands for 'not staying at home, going home late or behave likemen. A certain female aspirant after attending the transformational leadership training, she joineda different political party from her husband's to be nominated under women's seats (35% gender quotas). When the husband heard about it, he rushed to the hotel and pulled her out of the party meeting. After extensive dialogue with the friends, the wife was allowed to continue participatingin political party activities. However, she was mocked by the community around her. This is an area worth exploring further, as there may be a sense among men that think women joining politics can contribute to gender role reversal, stoking fears and insecurities. Engaging young men- political parties, community, and traditional and religious leaders in the conversations aimed at transforming the mind-set and negative norms leading to violence is critical for transformation change and promotion of gender equality and peacebuilding.

Lack of networks and information sharing mechanisms: Experience has shown that women leaders shy away from belonging to support networks compared to men. Networking is vital for transformational leaders for support, information sharing for campaigning, lobbying and advocacy, and mobilization of community and resources. Bridging the existing gap between women from Executive to women parliamentarians and CSOs; and women from the national leveland women from the grassroots could be instrumental in forging a strong network. Similarly, platform or conferences bringing women from all walk of life to deliberate on common issues affecting them could be a viable strategy for information sharing.

Lack of assertiveness: Successful leaders are described as showing characteristics of male leadership (masculinity, strong, arrogant, intelligent, ego-drivers, daring/boasting, competitive, dominance, and assertive/self-confidence/forceful). Some women tend to emulate such characterswhile others fear to assert the power and authority that comes with leadership). In contrary, feminine style of leadership is transformational as it involves (multi-tasking, emotional/ sensitive/practical, empathetic, compassionate, relationship building,

consensus building, collaborative, verbal, transparency, clear values, alignment to words and deeds and genuine dialogue). Such leadership qualities while considered calm are needed in engaging leaders in discussions aimed at transforming mind set and negative norms in the community.

Lack of role models and mentors: Findings from the study have also indicated that there are fewwomen role models or mentors that can support and encourage other women in their leadership journeys. Yet, there is disunity, unnecessary competition and 'pull her down syndrome' which undercut women's success in political career. At the community level the role of women leaders is to organise women, represent them in the peace committees where conflicts are reported and resolved, listen to the reported cases in their groups and communicate with community leaders. On the other hand, women political leaders have a role of representing the voices of women fromthe grassroots to the national levels – in commissions, parliament and executive levels byreviewing and passing legislations, policies and development programmes.

Through organised women's groups, associations and organisations voices of women from the grassroots are gathered and communicated with women political leaders at the national level. Equally, women in political parties have been communicating with their counterparts at the state/grassroots levels. To bridge the gap, the women's organisations have been organising training, workshop, breakfast-talks, dialogue and discussion to break the silence and create awareness on various issue affecting women. Women in higher leadership positions should be encouraged to mentor the young women aspirants and those in the Universities, private sectors andNGOs to join political and public institutions to transform cycles of negative decision-making processes.

Lack of continuous capacity strengthening in other areas: While transformational leadership skills have been imparted, results show that many women had basic education level while others had dropped out of school due to social- economic and cultural barriers. Other beneficiaries statedthat women shy away from education preferring marriage and resultantly leadership. Recognisingeducation is key to life and leadership in general, women expressed the need for advancing their careers and knowledge in other important areas to help them effectively exercise their leadership skills. These include skills in resource mobilization and management, lobbying/advocacy, networking, gender-based violence and protection of women's rights which are critical for transformational leadership.

Unfavorable institutional environment; In politics, being a post-conflict country/country in conflict at present, the legacies of gendered norms and combatants' behavior are enduring in political institutions and continuing to impact South Sudanese women in terms of unequal accessto influential resources, services and power. The study underlines the presence of gender-based violence and political intimidation which undercut the ability of women to effectively engage in political debates and represent women's policy concerns. To address the unfavorable institutionalenvironment, massive awareness raising and economic empowerment are crucial tools for womenin institutions of political recruitment. Women could also form alliances with other women's groups from political parties to address the gendered norms; participate in coalition of women forpeace where a unified voice of women can be upheld.

Persistence rule breaking and rule-bending: As highlighted in the introduction section, the mainchallenge for any leadership development program is that the acquisition of leadership knowledgeand skills is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to exercise in a transformational leadershiprole. Beyond a formal position, influencing and implementing change in beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors requires that the prospective leader has sufficient room to do so with prospective followers. When women are not given space, they will remain outside the cycle of influence. Despite the fact that the 35% gender quota has been enshrined in the ARCSS and Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS 2011) as amended, implementation lags behind as political parties are reluctant to nominate and appoint women in various decision-making structures.

To address this, there should be judicious efforts to promote education and information sharing among women, and equip them with skills to enroll in the public sector where they can influence decisions, and in informal sectors where they can manage businesses and find long-term sustainable employment.

III.   Conclusions

In conclusion, the GEPA Study and experiences of providing Transformation Leadership Trainingover six years offer an in-depth understanding of the progress and challenges encountered in upholding gender rights. Seemingly, the signing of the R-ARCSS in September 2018 and its implementation has not only become a new catalyst and a game changer, but has stirred up the conversation on women underrepresentation in both public life and public administration. Overallfindings reveal that gaps persist between policy and practice which undercut successful inclusionof women in the public sector and other decision-making structures. There are human resource policies and procedures in government to support women's advancement, but institutional environment is poor and there is limited implementation and enforcement mechanisms. This discourages and complicates the

judicious efforts calling for the equal access and presence in the executive, the judiciary, the senior civil servants, and the supreme audit bodies which areimperative institutions of accountability.

The continuous advocacy and lobbying by civic groups have also become 'a push factor' for the gradual numeric representation of women in the executive, parliament, in peace mechanisms and other public offices at national and sub-national levels. While it could be argued that the realized women's access and presence in public life can potentially trigger their increment in the public institutions, we argue that the relationship is not always straight forward because the pastexperiences of "rule breaking and rule-bending" perseveres. In the absence of accountability and oversight measures, the 35 % quotas could remain underplayed and ill-conceived as a "glass ceiling" which can potentially undermine women's advancement and promotion to key decision- making positions.

More efforts ought to be directed towards allocating funding support to the aspirants, the newly recruited and existing women leaders to advance their careers and capacities to participate in decision-making and engage effectively in policy and programming with a gender perspective. Specifically, Transformational leadership as one of the new theories of leadership can significantlyprovide answers to the competitive challenges and innovations faced by institutions/organizationsand community. Transformational leaders can facilitate changeover processes by placing value onthe development of a vision and by inspiring followers to pursue that vision. The four transformational leadership scales, namely charisma, inspiration, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation play a significant role in attracting followers and raising leaders who can challenge the gendered norms undermining women's right and access to resources such as land.

IV.   Recommendations

In view of the above the following recommendations are for policy, programmes and plans to improve women's visibility and presence in leadership positions:

Institutional frameworks for gender equality in public administration:
i)   The Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) should conduct a review of the legislative and policy framework to integrate the minimum of 35% quotas for women in all public administration (National Gender Policy; National Strategic Plan Framework; Labour Act, Civil Service Act and Public Service Regulations);
ii) Gender-sensitive public employment practices should consider the review of legislation, working environment, development of guidelines for accesss, promotion and retention procedures and institute flexible working hours for various groups;
iii) GRSS should establish an independent oversight mechanism and Women EmpowermentBill to monitor the implementation of quotas and sanctions political parties for non- compliance;
iv) Strengthening of coordination mechanisms with partners and civil society to participate and provide feedback on the overall implementation of the gender equality strategy;

Gender mainstreaming in the public sector: The Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare(MGCSW) should:
i)   Work with partners to build capacity of gender focal points in all Ministries, Commissions,Authorities and women in general through trainings, mentoring and coaching for effectiveimplementation and monitoring of gender equality agenda in their institutions;
ii) Work with National Bureau of Statistics to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to collect sex-disaggregated data: against national gender impact indicators and GE goals;
iii) Take forward Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) nationally (as well as at state level) andbuild capacity of undersecretaries, gender focal points; and budget and planning officers tobudget with a gender lens and integrate gender equality programmes (with the support of key partners such as UNDP and UNICEF);
iv) Identify and engage male champions of gender equality and traditional authorities in advocating for women's land rights, and increased representation in various committees byat least 35% quotas in land distribution and utilization from Payam to National levels, andcontinuous inclusion of women;
v)   Establish fora for increased information sharing and awareness raising on key gender provisions in the legal frameworks and Land Act, and advocate for enactment of Family Law and its wider dissemination for upholding women's rights;
vi) Promote Gender-sensitive parliamentary practices by working with the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and parties to introduce internal measures to promote women's advancement, candidacy and leadership. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairsshould facilitate the formal or informal cross-party women's caucuses, convene meetings for budget plans, laws and policy review.

In terms of Gender-sensitive practices in the Judiciary, the Republic of the Trsnsitional Government of National Unit (RTGoNU) should establish an adhoc Judicial Reform Committee for the transformation of the Judiciary as per R-ARCSS Article 1.17.3 and restructuring of the Judiciary during the transitional period in line

with Article 1.17.6.

As for the Security Sector Reform, the government should take stock of gender issues in the security sectors and development gender responsive guidelines to integrate gender in various decision-making structures.

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