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Women in governance: Examining the constitutional (in)adequacy of the 35-per cent women's quota

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Abstract

South Sudan's journey to democratisation includes recognition of the role of women's participation in decision-making in governance and other sectors. This much is reflected in constitutional frameworks, national polices, and the adoption of regional and international frameworks. However, despite the progress that has been made in advancing the reform agenda, the implementation of gender provisions is slow and hindered by factors such as competing priorities, multiple transitions, and lack of political will. This chapter evaluates progress in ensuring women's inclusion in governance, identifies major gaps, analyses current provisions in the Revitalized Agreement, and recommends measures to address key challenges.

Key words: *affirmative action; 35-per cent quota; constitutional guarantees*

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1 Introduction

South Sudanese women played a crucial role in the liberation struggle and the establishment of transitional governments in South Sudan. Although their contributions are not documented adequately, they are recognised implicitly through inclusion in the country's transitional constitutional frameworks. Notably, article 20 of the Bill of Rights in the Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan, 2005 highlights the rights of women; more specifically, subsection (a) stresses the promotion of women's participation in public life and the legislative and executive organs by providing that women must enjoy at least 25 per cent representation as affirmative action to redress imbalances created by history, customs and traditions. Likewise, the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 and its amended version both recognise the rights of women through an increase in the quota system from 25 per cent to 35 per cent. The latter provisions are the focus of discussion in this chapter.

In many countries, the occurrence of multiple socio-political transitions has been viewed as both a major obstacle to the reform agenda as well as a critical opportunity. Saskia et al.¹ point out that transitions can be openings to transform broader political, legal, and social barriers and develop an inclusive form of politics. Understanding why and how the concerned parties integrate or exclude women at such times is crucial in preventing patriarchal institutions and processes from hampering the inclusion agenda.

This chapter examines the status of women in governance in South Sudan and the (in)adequacy of the 35-per cent women's quota, which is enshrined in the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and the amended 2011 Transitional Constitution. The chapter also reflects on the meaning of affirmative action in South Sudan's context, highlights challenges, and offers recommendations on the way forward.

¹ S Brechenmacher & C Hubbard *Breaking the cycle of gender exclusion in political party development* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2020).

5.1 Regional and global context on gender inclusivity

Women are often seen as dynamic leaders of change who galvanise men and women to get involved in transformation initiatives, claim their rights, and strengthen their communities to be resilient. Unfortunately, they are just as often marginalised and regarded as less capable, and less important, than men; as a result, they are routinely excluded from decision-making processes and their needs, overlooked. As the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation notes:

Women all around the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.²

The patriarchy entrenched in most parts of the world has situated women and girls in an inferior position that denies them equal participation in decision-making. In Ghana, for instance, one critical area where gender imbalances manifest themselves is in the opportunities for women to make their voices heard and their views count in the decisions being made in their homes, workplaces, associations and communities.³

Similarly, data compiled by UN Women⁴ shows that women are under-represented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off. For example, as of January 2024, women represented only 23.3 per cent of cabinet members heading ministries or leading a policy area. The study also found that, as of June 2024, there were 27 countries where 28 women serve as heads of state and/or government; 26.9 per cent of parliamentarians were women, an increase of 11 per cent since 1995. Although few countries in the world have achieved gender parity, gender quotas have contributed substantially to progress over the years.

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on

² United Nations, Sixty-sixth session, Agenda item 28 (a), A/RES/66/130, 2011.

³ S Opare 'Engaging women in community decision-making processes in rural Ghana: Problems and prospects' (2005) 15(1) *Development in Practice* 90.

⁴ UN Women 'Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation' (2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation> (accessed 1 July 2025).

women, peace and security have all called for an end to discrimination against women and the adoption of strategies to empower them. In Africa, the continent's commitment to improving gender equality in political decision-making is shown in the adaptation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), which makes specific provisions for women's political participation and guarantees extensive rights to African women and girls through progressive provisions on reproductive health and rights, as well as harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. South Sudan, the focus of this chapter, has recently ratified the protocol and is in the process of domesticating it.

From the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted. When it comes to elections, a UN Women report⁵ stated that women are under-represented both as voters and as leaders, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector, or academia. This is so despite their proven abilities as agents of change and their right to participate equally in democratic governance. Women's inadequately meaningful participation in cultural, political, and economic life thus has been a cause for concern for decades.

In response, many countries – including Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and South Sudan – have opted to secure women's participation in decision-making positions through the adaption of affirmative action or quota systems in their policies and peace treaties. This is in keeping with article 9 of the Maputo Protocol, which provides that

States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures related to election and electoral processes and participation in development at all levels.

5.2 South Sudan's gender context: Practice and prospects

Gender relations in South Sudan are shaped by the social and economic realities of decades of conflict and the country's status as one of the

⁵ UN Women 'Women's leadership and political participation', <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation> (accessed 1 July 2025).

world's least developed countries. There are contradictory reports on the gender ratio in South Sudan. According to *Statistics Times*, South Sudan's population in 2024 is projected to be about 49.19 per cent male and 50.82 per cent female, compared to an earlier report by Care International which estimated South Sudan's population to be 50.7 per cent male and 49.3 per cent female in 2016.⁶

Despite these statistical differences, the fact is that there are marked disparities between men and women, especially in the areas of power-sharing and decision-making, legal rights, and access to and control of productive resources. These socio-economic conditions often leave women and girls vulnerable to customary practices and sexual, gender-based violence. In addition, women's access to healthcare, economic resources, and involvement in governance is limited. Many factors account for the diminished role of women, chief among them being challenges such as civil war, harmful cultural norms, and high illiteracy rates among women.

With the signing of R-ARCSS, there has been renewed hope among women, as the agreement offers opportunities for key reforms in domains such as constitution-making, elections, the security sector, gender justice, inclusivity, and gender equity and equality. Collective advocacy by women in civil society, government and the international community has resulted in the adoption of a reserved gender quota. The following sections will examine the quota's implementation, gaps and opportunities.

2 Affirmative action and why it matters

There is no uniform model or definition of affirmative action. However, it is generally understood to mean a policy framework designed to overcome unfairness, systemic denial, and violation of rights or fundamental freedoms. According to Bell et al.,⁷ affirmative action involves implementing policies that support groups lacking adequate representation due to historical discrimination. It also encompasses

⁶ CARE UK *Inequality and injustice: The deteriorating situation for women and girls in south sudan – Progressive gender analysis* (CARE 2016).

⁷ C Bell, A Hegarty & S Livingstone 'The enduring controversy: Developments in affirmative action law in North America' (1996) 1(3) *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 260.

programs, initiatives, measures, strategies, or interventions designed to address and rectify inequality and discrimination against women.

A common theme in these explanations is that there is an aim to eliminate barriers and inequality and/or promote an inclusive society. In regard to women, affirmative action has the objective of creating a space for women's participation and increasing their numbers in order to close gender gaps. As such, South Sudan's affirmative action practices can be thought of as a mechanism for increasing the number of women in decision-making spaces such as Parliament, the executive, and the judiciary.

Nevertheless, affirmative action is not just about numbers: it is also about upholding rights and responding to a history of institutionalised discrimination in which women have had very different experiences to men. It is hence also key to note that the affirmative action in question is not a limit to women's representation and participation but rather the bare minimum. In other words, although the R-ARCSS grants women a minimum representation of 35 per cent, they are free to compete with men for the remaining 65 per cent of positions.

Article 16(4) of the Transitional Constitution, 2011 (as amended) enshrines a gender quota by providing for 'at least thirty-five percent' women's representation across all spheres. The R-ARCSS further provides for gender representation in article 1(4)(4) and 1(4)(6).

3 The 35-per cent women's quota: Progress and impact

The journey to securing recognition of women's voices and ability to contribute to South Sudanese governance has involved rigorous advocacy, networking, alliance-building and the like at the national, state and administrative-area levels. It is encouraging to note that South Sudanese women have succeeded in advocating for the recognition of their role in the liberation struggle and beyond. In spite of a variety of challenges, there has been significant progress in women's representation and in creating an enabling legal and policy environment.

3.1 Supportive policy frameworks and progress made

The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) has developed a significant number of policy documents since its inception. These include a National Gender Policy (2013), which upholds the

government's commitment to the principles of equality and human rights as enshrined in the Transitional Constitution of 2011 and in the 2018 R-ARCSS.

South Sudan also signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2023 as a step forward in disability inclusion. In addition, it became the 44th member state of the African Union to ratify the Maputo Protocol, which aims to protect, promote and affirm women's human rights to exercise civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and collective and solidarity rights. The country has also formulated a national action plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which prioritises interventions and programmes aimed at empowering women and girls.

The following are highlights of some of the ground gained in implementing the minimum threshold of 35-per cent representation of women.

3.2 Increased representation of women in key decision-making positions

South Sudan has significant gaps in its gender data. However, progress has been made in identifying and producing key gender statistics, as evidenced by recent analyses conducted by development agencies, the government, and academic institutions. For example, as of February 2024, the UN Women Data Hub indicates that women held 32.4 per cent of seats in South Sudan's national parliament, while about 55.6 per cent of relevant legal frameworks to promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality are in place.⁸

3.2.1 The legislative arm

The South Sudan's reconstituted Transitional National Legislature (TNL) consists of two houses: the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA), with 550 members (of whom only 26 per cent are women) and the Council of States, with 100 members (only 23 per cent are women). The 35-per cent gender quota is exercised through an

⁸ UN Women 'Country Fact Sheet: South Sudan: Basic Gender Statistics' (2024), <https://data.unwomen.org/country/south-sudan> (accessed 1 July 2025).

exclusive women's party list in a proportional representation system.⁹ Progress has been seen in women's representation in leadership in the two houses. Currently, the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Deputy Speaker of the Council of States are both females. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) appointed a woman as its chief whip in the TNLA, though she was later replaced by a man. In addition, a few women are leading specialised committees in Parliament, such as the Petroleum Committee as well as the committees on agriculture and food and on gender, children and social welfare.

3.2.2 *The executive arm*

Article 1(4)(4) of the R-ARCSS stipulates that 35 per cent of the executive branch is to consist of women. In its nomination to the Council of Ministers, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) shall nominate no fewer than six women, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition, no fewer than three, and the South Sudan Opposition Alliance, no less than one. The move from the 25 per cent quota to the 35 per cent is a milestone. However, it comes with responsibility to work hard in identifying potential female candidates for positions and discovering entry-points for their participation.

Article 1(5)(2) and 1(5)(2)(4) of the R-ARCSS states that there shall be four vice presidents during the transitional period, one of which shall be a woman nominated by the former detainees. Accordingly, the appointment of the first female vice president in charge of the gender and youth cluster was welcomed. Among other things, the position involves oversight of four key ministries.¹⁰ The appointment represents an opportunity to strengthen the cluster and improve gender mainstreaming.

For the first time in South Sudan's history, women also held other government ministries, such as the Ministry of Defence and Veterans

9 V Lihiru *Women's political participation in South Sudan: Recommendations for the forthcoming election and the ongoing constitutional review process* (Friddrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2024).

10 The ministries under the gender and youth cluster are the following: Gender, Child and Social Welfare; Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management; Culture, Museums and National Heritage; and Youth and Sports.

Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, though in both cases they were replaced by men. Currently, women head the following ministries: Health; Interior; General Education; Gender, Child and Social Welfare; Agriculture, Environment and Forestry; Culture; and Tourism. Progress is evident too in the increase in the number of women occupying technical positions, such as in diplomatic missions (for example to the United Kingdom, Eritrea, Ethiopia and India).

3.2.3 *The judicial arm*

The R-ARCSS does not contain a specific provision on women's participation in the judiciary. However, there is mention of reform measures that will be taken, which include reviewing the Judiciary Act and building the capacity of judicial personnel. In this regard, an ad hoc 12-member Judicial Reform Committee was inaugurated in 2022 and tasked with reviewing relevant laws as well as advising on restructuring the judiciary to improve its effectiveness.

A recent study by the MGCSW on women in the judiciary found that in 2020 there were only 26 female judges as opposed to 106 male judges; 80 per cent of them were deployed in the lowest courts.¹¹ This number was projected to be even smaller in 2022 and 2023, at only 16 judges, given the high attrition rate for women (of 33 per cent, compared to 21 per cent for men). There are no women in either the Supreme Court or the Courts of Appeal, while the High Court has only a single woman as compared to 22 men.

The MGCSW's assessment focused on the state of women's representation at all levels, and identified enablers of, as well as barriers to, women's equal representation in the judiciary. The assessment also focused on gender mainstreaming and recognised policy gaps or areas that need strengthening. A notable gap in the legal framework that requires attention is the lack of laws on key matters such as gender equality, affirmative action, domestic violence, sexual offences, and the family. The judiciary has a major role to play in creating a gender-diverse institution through reforms that anchor the 35-per cent affirmative

¹¹ Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare *A study to establish the level of gender representation in the judiciary of South Sudan* (MGCSW 2023).

action provision in the proposed permanent constitution in clear, mandatory, and unequivocal language.

The following table provides a summary of the percentage distribution of decision-making positions by sex in the national public administration as of 2021.

Positions in public service	Data disaggregated by sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
President	1	100	0	0.0	1	
Vice presidents	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	
Presidential advisors	2	100	0	0	2	
Ministers	26	74.3	8	25.7	35	
Deputy ministers	9	90.0	1	10.0	10	
Chairpersons of commission	22	81.5	5	18.5	27	
Deputy chairpersons of commission	14	63.6	8	36.4	22	
Ministerial advisors	52	92.9	4	7.1	56	
Undersecretaries	34	91.9	4	8.1	37	
Executive directors	29	82.9	6	17.1	35	
Director-generals	153	86.4	24	13.6	177	
Deputy directors-general	11	78.6	3	21.4	14	
Director	323	84.8	58	15.2	381	
Deputy directors	402	83.8	78	16.3	480	
TOTAL	1 082	84.4	200	15.6	1 282	

The evidence underscores a persistent disjuncture between policy frameworks and their practical application, a gap that continues to constrain the substantive inclusion of women within the public sector and decision-making institutions. Although formal human resource policies exist to facilitate women's advancement, their limited implementation

and weak enforcement mechanisms significantly undermine their transformative potential.

4 The women's quota: Implementation challenges

Despite some progress, South Sudan's persistent failure to enforce its women's representation quota constitutes not only a breach of its constitutional obligations but also a violation of international commitments, including those enshrined in the Maputo Protocol. Analytical work on this issue by think tanks, civil society actors, and non-governmental organisations remains limited; however, the few available studies consistently point to systematic non-compliance. Evidence compiled by the centre for inclusive governance and NPA¹² indicates that executive appointments have fallen short of the obligations outlined in articles 1(4)(4), 1(12)(2), and 1(12)(5) of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. These provisions explicitly require parties to the RTGoNU to ensure that at least 35 per cent of nominees to executive positions are women, mandating, *inter alia*, no fewer than 12 women in the Council of Ministers (article 1(12)(2)) and at least three female deputy ministers (article 1(12)(5)). Current appointments fall significantly short of these commitments, thereby undermining both the spirit and letter of the agreement.

According to parliamentary clerk records and a study on Gender Equality in Public Administration conducted by the MGCSW in conjunction with the UNDP and University of Juba in 2021 and 2022, out of the 12 legislative bodies in South Sudan (two at national level and ten at state level), five of the 12 speakers of legislative bodies are women. This is the only position in which women exceed the 35-per cent quota (five out of 12 equates to 41.6 per cent). That aside, only one of the six chief whips of political parties in the TNLA is a woman; similarly, only one of the 12 clerks of legislative bodies (at both the national and state level) is a woman. Twelve of the 35 chairpersons of parliamentary committees in the TNLA (34.3 per cent), and nine of 35 deputy chairpersons (25.7

12 CIGPJ & Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) *Data analysis report on women's representation in the Transitional Unity Government of South Sudan* (Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice 2024).

per cent), are women. Of a total of 1 650 Members of Parliament in the national and state legislatures, 517 are women (31.3 per cent).

4.1 Women's representation in public administration

Gender equality is critical in public administration because it impacts on how political and economic choices are made and how budgets are planned and spent. In addition, a gender-sensitive public administration is certain to translate policy differently into practice. Public administration is a critically important lever of development: it is at the foundation of government and plays an integral role in formulating national policies and programmes. Ideally, public administration should be led by the government and guided by the principles of justice, equality, fairness and non-discrimination.¹³ However, public administration in fragile contexts such as South Sudan's faces large challenges, one of which is limited participation by women in decision-making positions and another, a lack of reliable, disaggregated data on gender equality in public administration.

The argument here is that public administration can lead the way in removing gender-based barriers and allowing the benefits and rewards of men and women leading and participating equally to be showcased. The public administration determines how political and economic choices are carried out, as well as how finances are planned and spent. Additionally, it is a major employer of women in several developing nations.

Women's representation in South Sudan is further constrained by factors such as intimidation, gender-based violence, and limited educational attainment. These barriers are not unique to South Sudan; similar patterns are observed elsewhere. For example, a USAID study in Sierra Leone found that women's voices, visibility, participation, and representation in elective and appointed positions remain significantly lower than men's. Contributing factors include limited economic independence, high illiteracy rates, entrenched socio-cultural norms, political violence and reprisals, the absence of protective legal frameworks, and women's limited confidence to contest for public office.¹⁴

13 United Nations Development Programme *Gender equality in public administration* (UNDP 2021).

14 USAID *Gender assessment for USAID/Sierra Leone* (USAID 2010).

A study conducted in South Sudan in 2022 by Lupa and Atem on the participation of young women in decision-making found that, out of 64 political parties, only three were women-led and only two legally registered.¹⁵ In other words, nearly all of the parties that are signatory to the R-ARCSS are not legally registered political parties. Of the 100 members of the Council of States, only 26 are women and, of them, only seven are below the age of 45. Of the 550 members of the TNLA, 171 are women: 37 are women under 45, and only 17, under 35. This state of affairs has been attributed to the weakness of political parties and the lack of mechanisms for enforcing the quota on women's representation.

4.2 Policy options, opportunities and recommendations

As South Sudan prepares to engage in two major democratic processes that require the participation of all citizens, women included – the constitution-making process and the holding of elections – it need to be emphasised that the principles on which the permanent constitution-making process is based should include the recognition of gender equity and affirmative action in this regard.

Section 6(2) of the Constitution Making Process Act requires that the permanent constitution-making process be based on the initiation of a federal and democratic system of government that reflects the character of South Sudan in its institutions and guarantees good governance, constitutionalism, the rule of law, human rights, gender equity, and affirmative action. The same Act is gender-responsive and calls on the RTGoNU to ensure that at least 35 per cent of the members of the constitution-making mechanisms are women; that the chairperson and deputy chairperson of the reconstituted National Constitution Review Commission are of opposite genders; and that the process is based on and guided by the principles of gender equity and affirmative action for which it provides.

In this vein, the MGCSW is spearheading the development of a women's empowerment bill which is intended to improve compliance with the constitutional provisions on women's inclusion and participation, in particular the 35-per cent quota. The bill provides that the reconstituted

15 E Lupa & A Atem *Young women in political institutions in South Sudan: Lessons from lived experiences* (Friddrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2022).

National Elections Commission shall take adequate measures to guarantee women's participation in elections as well as reduce barriers to their inclusion. Moreover, the reconstituted Political Parties Council shall take adequate measures to ensure that women comprise at least 35 per cent of the membership and executive organs of all political parties; it shall also ensure that all political parties participating in an election adhere to the constitutional principle of women's representation.

Clearly, South Sudan needs to address the inadequacies that have been highlighted in the implementation of the 35-per cent gender quota. The options include increased advocacy to ensure effective implementation of the quota, the establishment of dedicated institutions to monitor that implementation, and the establishment of mechanisms for increasing financial resources to support the participation of women in electoral positions and practices. The amended National Elections Act of 2023 includes a 35-per cent gender quota, but it does not include provisions that address the entrenched social, economic and cultural beliefs that hinder women from competing for legislative seats and other elective positions – which means that this important gap still exists in current policies.

Furthermore, the reconstituted Political Parties Council and reconstituted National Elections Commission need to be able to take punitive measures in the event of non-compliance by political parties. Special measures also need to be put in place to cover a situation in which the electoral process does not deliver at least 35-per cent representation to women. The measures may include women's lists, special seats, women's constituencies, or other affirmative-action modalities that may be deemed necessary and viable for achieving these ends.

5 Conclusion

Timing is critical in assessing women's position in governance and the inadequacy of the 35-per cent quota, particularly as South Sudan is undergoing key national processes. These include gender-sensitive reviews of legislation on elections, political parties, the economy, the security sector, transitional justice, and the judiciary.¹⁶ Integrating a gender

¹⁶ V Lihiru *Women's political participation in South Sudan: Recommendations for the forthcoming election and the ongoing constitutional review process* (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2024).

perspective and affirmative action in these reforms must be seen as central to both the constitution-making process and broader state-building. In this regard, the active involvement of young women is essential for strengthening women's meaningful participation in decision-making and nation-building.¹⁷ Advocacy and coalition-building by both women and men is equally vital to advancing equal rights and opportunities.¹⁸

Women's participation in decision-making should be recognised both as a human right and as a prerequisite for sustainable development.¹⁹ Across Africa, many states are embracing democratic practices such as constitution-making and electoral reform, which require inclusive participation. South Sudan, too, must commit to gender equality, as men's and women's joint engagement in decision-making broadens perspectives, fosters innovation, diversifies leadership capacity, reduces conflict, and improves the quality of governance.²⁰ The benefits of women's inclusion extend beyond gender justice, positively impacting society as a whole. However, entrenched social norms continue to restrict women's agency and participation, underscoring the need to address discriminatory attitudes across age groups and social strata to achieve a more equitable distribution of roles.²¹

South Sudan's future depends on correcting historical exclusions. The R-ARCSS presents a critical opportunity for citizens to reshape the state and advance women's role in governance. The challenges outlined in this chapter should therefore be read as lessons and opportunities for reform. Governing a post-conflict state requires consensus-building, agenda-setting, and inclusive participation, not the rigidity characteristic of liberation struggles.²² Advancing reforms will depend on combatting corruption, reforming the civil service to create fiscal space, and embedding transparency and inclusivity in state institutions – all of which are necessary to enhance service delivery and state legitimacy.²³

In summary, progress in women's representation must be interrogated against persistent inconsistencies in the implementation of the 35 per cent

17 Lupa & Atem (n 15).

18 Brechenmacher & Hubbard (n 1).

19 UNDP (n 13).

20 UN Women (n 5).

21 CIGPJ & NPA (n 12).

22 Brechenmacher & Hubbard (n 1).

23 UNDP (n 13).

gender quota. Failure to address these accountability and enforcement gaps undermines reform processes and obstructs genuine progress in women's political participation (Lihiru 2024). Understanding the implications of transitional shortcomings under the R-ARCSS is key to designing effective reforms and reinforcing the legitimacy of governance institutions (CIGPJ & NPA 2024). As South Sudan enters a fragile post-transitional period, long-term, structural solutions are urgently required to consolidate gains and embed gender equality in decision-making processes (UN Women 2024).

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