Citizen Participation in Natural Resource Governance: A Case of Oil in South Sudan

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ABSTRACT

South Sudan has immense economic potential in its natural resource wealth, such as oil. Nevertheless, the resources have not been utilised towards development. Instead, it has experienced resource conflicts that compromise the continent’s peace and security. This paper evaluates the role of citizen participation in natural resource governance in South Sudan and its impacts on oil governance. The paper hypothesises that citizen participation is critical in natural resource governance and a vital tool for promoting peace and security in societies. It argues from the perspective of natural resource conflicts and governance. It asserts that citizen participation addresses negative aspects such as corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, gender discrimination, and ethnic polarisation. It argues that there is a great need to enhance structures that support citizen participation towards effective governance of resources and, hence, sustainable peace. The paper adopted the mixed-methods research methodology.

Keywords: Accountability, citizen participation, collaborative governance, governance, legal framework, natural resources, rule of law, South Sudan, transparency.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the demand for natural resources continues to rise and various stakeholders aim to benefit from their exploitation, addressing conflicts related to these resources has become increasingly important in the 21st century (UNEP, 2015). The significance of citizen participation in the governance of natural resources has become apparent in Africa’s quest for peace. Citizen participation in natural resource governance entails involving communities in the decision-making process regarding the management of public strategic resources like oil (Sivarajah et al., 2017). This process allows citizens to exercise their rights to influence decisions that directly impact their well-being and enables them to take ownership of the governance process and influence its outcomes (Chirisa & Mabeza, 2019).

However, more frequently, citizens have been overlooked in the process of resource governance, hence amplifying the deep-seated grievances citizens have on natural resource management in their respective countries. These grievances fueled by lack of citizen participation, when left unresolved, transform into violent conflicts compromising peace and security.

Thus, emphasising citizen participation in resource governance is essential towards mitigating resource conflicts as it gives citizens a voice in the decision-making process and allows them to express their needs and preferences. As Darby (2010) adds, citizen participation creates a platform to settle disagreements and increase transparency and accountability in the resource governance process.

Hence, citizen participation should prioritize the inclusion of the people rather than following a top-down approach. By adopting a people-centred approach, implemented policies can better align with the needs and aspirations of the population. Sato (2000) affirms that engaging citizens in natural resource governance allows them to actively monitor and evaluate the process, consequently promoting transparency. Furthermore, Sato emphasizes that excluding citizens from the resource governance process can breed mistrust, hence a fertile ground for conflicts to occur (Sato, 2000).

Therefore, natural resource governance policies should be aligned with social values and aims, with the goal of fostering community cohesion (Kaufmann, 2003). To achieve these goals, citizen participation in policy formation and implementation becomes a key factor. Citizens ought to take up their public role of electing competent leaders and holding them accountable seriously towards fostering citizen participation.

Besides, it is paramount that citizen participation in resource governance not only promotes but also actively advocates for access, accountability, and agenda-setting. This requires establishing robust...
institutions and processes that provide opportunities for citizens to proactively engage and exert influence. Moreover, it is essential that these institutions empower citizens to hold leaders accountable and even have the authority to remove those who demonstrate a lack of integrity in managing public resources. By embodying these principles, citizen participation can truly drive meaningful change and ensure responsible resource governance.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper employs the collaborative governance theory, which emerged from analysing how communities were managing resources such as water, habitat, and forests. The theory was used to understand how different institutions can work towards resource management and sustainability.

As highlighted by proponents such as Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh, natural resources governance should be a collaborative process with structures that encourage public policy decision-making, engaging people constructively across all levels of public, private, community, and civic spheres towards carrying out public purpose (Emerson et al., 2012).

Collaborative governance theory proposes that an effective governance of natural resources process requires that all stakeholders be engaged in the process of decision-making toward policy outcomes (J. Freeman, 1997). In addition, decisions made should be a reflection of the different interests of different stakeholders towards an agreed end (Judith & Booher, 2003).

As Ansell and Gash (2008) state, collaborative governance theory responds to the failure of downstream implementation of policy and addresses the high politicisation of regulation that hinder effective citizen participation towards good governance. The theory proposes that all stakeholders/actors, both states and non-states, should directly be involved in decision-making through citizen participation. Logsdon (1991) adds that a key incentive towards encouraging citizen participation is when the government is aware that the attainment of good governance is tied to cooperation from the citizens towards goal attainment.

Effective leadership, therefore, that supports transparency, accountability, and peaceful settlement of disputes becomes key towards creating a safe space for citizens to participate (Warner, 2006). This is achieved when those in power promote an environment of active participation that encourages citizen participation. Collaborative governance in natural resource governance should be legitimate via the establishment of procedural legitimacy and trust-building. Murdock et al. (2005) prescribe that such legitimacy depends on 'stakeholders’ perceptions that the process is fair, clear, and open. In addition, the actors should be confident that policy negotiation is real and devoid of private secrecy.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted the mixed-methods research methodology. Qualitative and quantitative data were used. Primary data was drawn from questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions administered to relevant respondents such as academicians, oil companies, government officials, and community leaders. Secondary sources were drawn from books, journals, reports, and published empirical reports. This study employed probability and non-probability sampling methods where the desired population under study was sampled.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Citizen Participation Rationale in Natural Resource Governance

Advocates of citizen participation employ various perspectives and arguments to advance their viewpoints. For example, political scientists perceive citizen participation as a governance approach that seeks to strengthen democracy by fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including governments, citizens, and multinational corporations. Through this collaborative process of resource governance, the goal is to achieve inclusivity and ensure that all relevant parties are involved (Hong, 2015).

Inclusivity ensures that power relations are restructured from state-centred control to citizen-centred control; hence management authority is transferred to the public towards embracing a bottom-up approach to governance (Shackleton et al., 2002).

Inclusive citizen participation guarantees a reconfiguration of power dynamics, shifting the focus from centralized state control to citizen-centered control. This transfer of management authority to the public promotes a bottom-up approach to governance (Shackleton et al., 2002). By embracing inclusivity, we empower citizens to actively engage in decision-making processes, fostering a more democratic and
The concept of civic regionalism asserts that communities residing near natural resources can effectively manage resources if they are provided with opportunities for participation. Lane (2006) supports that host communities have firsthand knowledge of environmental implications associated with resource extraction by virtue of their proximity to the resources. Hence, these communities can play a vital role in promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly practices for resource utilization.

The collaborative governance approach advocates for a more inclusive and harmonious approach to decision-making by actively incorporating all stakeholders, resulting in policy decisions that consider and represent the diverse viewpoints and interests in resource governance. As supported by R. B. Freeman (1997), collaborative governance seeks to ensure that diverse interests are taken into consideration throughout the governing process, thereby preventing conflicts.

The neoliberal approach, on the other hand, advocates for resource decentralization and privatization, with citizens having the ability to express their preferences in resource governance. Conversely, it emphasizes the importance of institutions and procedures that allow for participation. As Fiorino (1990) adds, the 'government's role should be to support citizens achieve their interests, desires, and preferences, rather than making policies and expecting citizens to endorse them. The government should, therefore, continually encourage citizen participation and be a facilitator. This will create a safe environment for citizen interaction as well as a means of resolving disputes (Kasprowicz et al., 1988).

Lastly are the citizenship and rights-based approaches, which highlight the importance of understanding the environment that emboldens citizen participation. It argues that recognizing the specific context and location in which participation occurs enables communities to assert their identity as citizens, granting them the inherent right to engage in the governance process. This perspective emphasizes that the rights to participate are not simply bestowed but must be actively demanded by citizens. As a result, citizens are encouraged to proactively influence policies and advocate for their rightful inclusion in decision-making processes.

B. Citizen Participation and Peace

In this paper, the concept of peace, as employed, draws inspiration from Albert Einstein, who expands the definition beyond the mere absence of war to encompass the existence of justice, law, and order within society, particularly within government structures. This viewpoint finds reinforcement in the perspective of Martin Luther, who characterizes peace as not only the absence of war or conflict but also as a state that incorporates principles of justice (King, 2008).

Citizen participation assumes various forms and meanings depending on the context, but there is a consensus that its significance lies in providing opportunities for less-engaged citizens to take part. As Cunningham (1972) acknowledges, citizen participation focuses on empowering "ordinary people" who lack formal power but bear the consequences of decisions made on their behalf. In this sense, citizen participation serves to empower those with limited influence and allows them to shape matters that directly impact their lives. Hardina (2008) accentuates that citizen participation enables marginalized citizens to influence the decision-making processes. She argues that citizen participation not only holds the potential to alleviate social and economic oppression but also serves as a vital tool for preventing violence (Hardina, 2008).

When citizens are excluded, they are deprived of the ability to express their concerns regarding issues that directly impact them. In such cases, citizens are unable to influence and persuade those in power to effect change. This especially happens when avenues for dialogue are blocked. This situation often results in grievances that, if not appropriately addressed, can escalate into conflicts. Consequently, citizen participation plays a critical role in providing an avenue for citizens to voice their concerns, address power imbalances, and contribute to peaceful resolutions.

Citizen participation also entails the integration of citizens’ concerns, values, and needs into the decision-making process, aiming to ensure the legitimacy of governance (Creighton, 2005). Creighton (2005) relates four key continuums that contribute to building trust and legitimacy in resource governance. These continuums involve informing citizens about each step of the governance process, actively listening to their ideas and grievances, engaging citizens in problem-solving, and reaching agreements that satisfy all parties involved. These components are essential in establishing trust and advancing peace among different stakeholders. He adds that the level of citizen engagement in decision-making shapes the effectiveness of public participation, eventually determining the success of natural resource governance.

C. Citizen Participation in Resource Governance of South Sudan

The history of South Sudan's separation from Sudan exemplifies the consequences of excluding people from governance processes. When individuals are denied the opportunity to participate, feelings of deprivation and discontent emerge, resulting in grievances. Failure to address these grievances creates a
fertile ground for violence, as people protest against discrimination and exclusion from matters that directly affect their lives.

The failure of the Northern Sudanese government to engage its citizens serves as a prime illustration of how exclusion played a pivotal role in igniting and perpetuating the protracted civil war in Sudan. Since 1956, the government pursued a policy of marginalization towards the southern region, employing various restrictive mechanisms that mired citizen participation. The lack of involvement and participation of the Southern population emerged as a significant factor fueling the conflict, eventually culminating in the South’s secession from the North.

Despite the lessons learned from their history, the South Sudanese government has not effectively addressed the lack of citizen participation. This has resulted in ongoing marginalization and exclusion of citizens from governance processes, undermining peace and security in the country, despite the constitution of South Sudan mandating that citizen participation is a legal right for all.

In part 4 of the revised constitution of South Sudan Constitution 2011 (rev. 2013) (n.d.), it highlights that:

“South Sudan is governed based on a decentralised democratic system and is an all-embracing homeland for its people. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-racial entity where such diversities peacefully co-exist. South Sudan is founded on justice, equality, respect for human dignity, and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” (South Sudan Constitution 2011 (rev. 2013), n.d.)

The South Sudanese constitution acknowledges that peaceful coexistence is built on justice, equality, and respect for human rights. Encouraging citizen participation in governance aligns with these principles, granting citizens a voice and upholding their dignity and rights.

The absence of citizen participation poses significant challenges, leading to protests when the people’s voice is silenced. In South Sudan, citizens are denied the opportunity to participate in governance, and those who raise their concerns are targeted and killed by unknown forces. Such violence discourages citizens from speaking out on governance matters, as highlighted by Deng and Levander (2022), who note that "unknown gunmen" specifically target politically engaged citizens. According to findings from a focus group discussion, extensive citizen intimidation in South Sudan has significantly hindered meaningful citizen participation. This deliberate tactic is employed to exert control over the population through fear, discouraging them from openly challenging the government's mismanagement. Consequently, citizens are silenced and prevented from actively engaging in governance matters, thereby impeding their ability to influence decision-making processes.

The absence of citizen participation affects the legitimacy of government processes, as it diminishes ownership, credibility, and acceptance. Engaging citizens enables them to hold leaders accountable. In South Sudan, widespread dissatisfaction with resource management has eroded the government's legitimacy. It is highlighted that those who fought for South Sudan's independence exploited its nascent institutions, plundered its resources, and sparked a devastating war in 2013, resulting in significant loss of life and displacement.

A government that fails to involve its citizens in resource management lacks accountability. Without transparency and accountability, resources are misused, depriving the people of their benefits and creating a breeding ground for conflicts. Citizen engagement is crucial for effective and responsible resource governance.

Additionally, citizen participation enriches governance by bringing diverse knowledge and insights to the decision-making process. Communities in resource-rich areas possess a valuable understanding of their resources and local context, contrary to the perception of their ignorance. Their familiarity with the land, heritage, and development priorities makes them well-suited to contribute meaningful input. In the case of South Sudan, enabling local participation in the oil-rich region would provide valuable information for economic development and environmental sustainability. Recognizing the expertise of citizens and involving them in governance ensures better decision-making and enhances both the economy and the environment.

Further, citizen participation empowers communities by leveraging their skills and knowledge to enhance resource governance. It fosters a sense of ownership and sustainability in projects. However, when communities feel excluded from the governance process, particularly when outsiders are involved in resource extraction, mistrust and suspicion arise. This lack of trust can lead to the rejection of the governance process by communities. Therefore, citizen participation is crucial for building trust, ensuring ownership, and fostering successful resource governance initiatives.
V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. The Challenge of Citizen Participation in Oil Governance of South Sudan

South Sudan faces a complex crisis marked by underdevelopment, human rights abuses, and violent conflicts. Poor governance is a major factor contributing to the country's suffering. The absence of citizen participation in governance, particularly in the management of strategic public resources such as oil, is a clear indication of poor governance.

This lack of participation weakens crucial aspects of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and agenda-setting. Consequently, the country faces a multitude of challenges, including human rights abuses, weak rule of law, ethnic divisions, corruption, and inequality. Resolving these issues requires addressing the causal problem of poor governance that hinders socio-economic progress and exacerbates political conflicts in South Sudan. Without addressing governance issues, South Sudan is unlikely to overcome its challenges and achieve lasting peace and stability.

B. Corruption as a Challenge to Citizen Participation

Corruption remains a roadblock to citizen involvement in South Sudan’s oil sector. Despite the 2018 Revitalizing Peace Agreement and initial efforts to combat corruption and establish accountability structures, the government has shown a lack of commitment to implementing crucial reforms. Corruption permeates all sectors of South Sudan, including the government apparatus, according to Mores (2013). It takes various forms, including financial and political corruption, often fueled by ethnic divisions. Rather than prioritizing effective management of public resources, the government is consumed by internal power struggles, with different groups vying for control over resource revenues (De Vries & Schomerus, 2017).

This results in the privatization of public resources like oil, leaving the needs and interests of the people unmet. Gillies (2020) emphasizes that corruption in the oil sector jeopardizes efforts to mitigate climate change, ensure peace and security, promote democracy, and eradicate extreme poverty. In South Sudan, corruption in the oil sector has deprived the people of economic prosperity and meaningful participation.

According to a recent Human Rights Council report (URG, 2021), ruling elites in South Sudan have reportedly embezzled a staggering $73 million between 2018 and 2021, while $4 billion has allegedly been diverted from public accounts to individual ones since 2012. Instead of fueling economic growth, oil revenues have become a means for those in power to gain political advantage. This situation has fostered a patronage system, hindering progress and development in South Sudan (De Waal, 2014).

Corruption in the oil sector of South Sudan has been a substantial barrier to citizen participation, preventing citizens from actively participating in governing processes. It undermines openness, accountability, and fairness, producing an environment in which ordinary citizens' voices are muffled, and their interests are ignored. Corruption undermines public faith in institutions and inhibits citizens from participating in decision-making processes because they believe their efforts will be fruitless in the face of widespread corruption. Overcoming the challenge of corruption is critical for developing meaningful citizen engagement and establishing a system that preserves honesty, fairness, and the interests of the larger population.

C. Rule of Law and Citizen Participation

Good governance of natural resources necessitates the existence and implementation of robust legal provisions that uphold good governance. Adherence to the law serves as a crucial indicator of good governance and significantly enhances citizen participation. The absence of the rule of law undermines every endeavor aimed at fostering participation. Procedural standards of participation, which form an integral part of the rule of law, must be treated with utmost seriousness. To ensure the effective governance of public strategic resources, regulatory policies must be valued and defended.

The rule of law embodies just systems that facilitate good governance. Key aspects of the rule of law include the equality of all individuals before the law, among others. This means that the law of the land should be applied impartially without favoring some over others. When the rule of law is not upheld, citizens suffer and are deprived of opportunities to participate in matters that affect them. As emphasized by the United Nations (UN, n.d.), the rule of law signifies governance that is not arbitrary and is devoid of the power and whims of an absolute ruler. It is closely intertwined with principles of justice and the rejection of absolute power and discretion.

The rule of law in South Sudan is frequently disregarded for political purposes, allowing those in power to establish a system that shields and promotes their corrupt practices. Elites aligned with the ruling regime hold sway over critical sectors like the judiciary and financial institutions, essentially functioning as a shadow government. They exploit this power to bypass transparency requirements, perpetuating corruption and impeding progress.

Consequently, citizens are afraid to engage in matters that concern them. In a focus group discussion,
participants highlighted the lack of freedom to question the government's mismanagement of resources. Speaking openly about the state of affairs is perilous, and those who dare to do so often pay with their lives. As a result, people silently observe, hoping that one day, the leadership of the nation will embrace sanity. One significant aspect of the absence of the rule of law in the governance of oil in South Sudan is the poor enforcement of laws pertaining to oil governance and citizen participation. Although having laws in place to govern participation is a crucial step towards achieving citizen engagement, it is the political will to implement these laws that truly makes a difference.

Despite the existence of the Petroleum Act of 2012, which calls for transparency and accountability in reporting oil revenues, the implementation of these provisions is lacking. Awolich and Akol (2016) support this notion, highlighting factors such as insufficient political will, limited capacity, and lack of financial resources as obstacles to the implementation of transparency and accountability measures in oil governance in South Sudan. This clearly indicates a lack of citizen engagement, with the government failing to uphold and respect the citizens' role in participating.

Furthermore, the government does not make efforts to involve citizens in decision-making processes or seek their prior informed consent for oil-related projects. In the field study, when respondents were asked whether the government seeks informed consent from citizens for oil projects, a significant majority (80%) expressed their frustration, stating that they are never informed about such projects (Author's field data, 2022). They also revealed that there existed secretive dealings by the government regarding oil management and revenue, which denied them the opportunity to participate and voice their concerns about projects that they believed may harm their well-being.

The absence of the rule of law in the governance of oil in South Sudan is reflected in the poor enforcement of laws related to oil governance and citizen participation. Despite the existence of the Petroleum Act of 2012, which emphasizes transparency and accountability in reporting oil revenues, these provisions are not effectively implemented. Insufficient political will, limited capacity, and a lack of financial resources are cited as barriers to implementing transparency and accountability measures in oil governance.

D. Ethnic Polarisation and Citizen Participation

Ethnic polarisation poses a significant challenge to citizen participation and accountability, as it leads to discrimination and exclusion. When citizens are divided along ethnic lines, there is a higher likelihood of perceiving injustice and seeking solace in their ethnic identities. These identities are then exploited to mobilise resources for war and create barriers between communities.

In the realm of natural resource governance, ethnic polarisation is evident in the uneven distribution of benefits. When a particular ethnic group receives more resource allocation than others, grievances arise, often leading to conflicts. In South Sudan, the pursuit of petrodollars has fueled internal political strife and exacerbated ethnic tensions, hindering the establishment of a consensual governance system that promotes devolution of authority and resources. Political elites, in their quest to control oil within their respective regions, have formed ethnic camps, pitted them against each other, and used oil as a bargaining chip. This has resulted in ethnic divisions and increased marginalisation.

The 2013 war, for example, was fought along ethnic lines between Riek Machar's camp and Salva Kiir's camp, with oil being manipulated for strategic advantage. Riek's camp blocked oil activities in their region to prevent the government from benefiting from oil revenue (Nyadera, 2018). When public resources are perceived as belonging exclusively to certain ethnic groups due to their geographical location, it undermines national unity and cohesion, inciting conflicts between communities and hindering collective action.

A disunited community is less capable of raising a unified voice against injustices and mismanagement. Indeed, an ethnically polarised society becomes a tool for elites to further divide communities and impede their ability to challenge governance malpractices. As argued by Cheeseman (2015), elites in South Sudan have fostered scenarios that encourage communities to retreat into ethnic cocoons in order to advance their political agendas and maintain their power.

E. Constant Conflict and Insecurity as a Challenge to Citizen Participation

Persistent conflict and insecurity pose significant obstacles to effective citizen participation and contribute to human rights abuses. In regions plagued by violence, the very structures that support freedom and liberty are often destroyed, undermining avenues for citizen engagement. The prolonged conflict and insecurity in South Sudan have had detrimental effects on citizen participation, economic development, and human rights (Cheeseman, 2015). According to Kishi and Pavlik (2020), South Sudan has experienced continuous conflict from 2012 to 2018.

These ongoing cycles of violence have denied citizens their right to participate in matters that affect them and have hindered access to essential services and structures crucial for improving their lives (OECD, 2010). South Sudanese citizens have suffered greatly as social sectors such as health, education,
water, and sanitation have been neglected. The displacement of people has led to social disruptions and a humanitarian crisis, with approximately 8.9 million individuals in dire need of basic necessities like food (World Bank, 2022). In such dire conditions, meaningful citizen participation in the governance process becomes nearly impossible.

Furthermore, conflict in South Sudan has created an environment that lacks accountability in the oil sector and discourages critical scrutiny of oil revenue utilization. The political class has seized opportunities during the conflict to misappropriate oil revenue by obtaining loans not allocated for development purposes. As highlighted by the International Crisis Group (2021), President Kiir mortgaged future oil exports for advance loans, while his loyalists diverted significant portions of state revenue from the official budget, leading to a cash-strapped government and a disillusioned population. Creating a conducive environment is crucial for citizen participation, as it requires spaces and contexts that foster dialogue. In the presence of violence, these communication channels are severely challenged and negatively impacted, further impeding meaningful citizen engagement.

F. Civic Education towards Effective Citizen Participation

Inadequate civic education poses a significant challenge to citizen participation and the exercise of their rights. Without proper education, citizens are unaware of their rights and lack the knowledge necessary to actively engage in matters that affect them. In South Sudan, the literacy rate remains low, with approximately 27% of the population unable to read and write, placing the country among the lowest globally (Ponnie, 2019). This low literacy rate hinders citizens' understanding of their right to participate, even when it is enshrined in the constitution. Instead of prioritizing civic education to empower citizens, the government has exploited their vulnerability, exacerbated marginalization, and suppressed their voices.

The importance of literacy and education in facilitating citizen participation cannot be overstated. As South Sudan's minister of education acknowledges, literacy plays a crucial role in empowering citizens to engage in matters of concern and serves as a pathway to alleviate poverty and conflict (Ponnie, 2019). Education equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to lead healthier and more peaceful lives, as it reduces the prevalence of grievances. However, this positive impact has not been realized in South Sudan, and it significantly affects citizens' ability to participate, particularly in resource governance.

It is critical to address the absence of civic education in order to build an informed and involved citizenry. Individuals can better grasp their rights and actively participate in changing their communities and resource governance by encouraging literacy and offering comprehensive civic education.

G. Gender Imbalances and Discrimination as a Challenge to Citizen Participation

Gender imbalances and discrimination in key sectors of resource governance have significantly impeded citizen participation in South Sudan. Such imbalances and discrimination serve as indicators of poor governance and have violated the social and economic rights of the people, leading to grievances and conflicts. Women, despite their important role in peacebuilding, are often excluded from the oil governance process and face injustices in salary enumeration. Gender-based discrimination in salary payment has been observed, with men earning 2.3% more than women, contrary to the constitutional provision of equal pay for equal work and equal participation in public life. The underrepresentation of women in the oil sector is perpetuated by cultural norms and limited access to education in science, technology, and engineering. This exclusion not only hampers women's economic empowerment but also contributes to structural violence and inequality.

Furthermore, unequal salary emulation between foreign and South Sudanese workers in the oil sector is another form of discrimination that hinders effective participation and benefit from the sector. Chinese expatriates, for example, receive higher salaries (6% more) compared to local workers with similar qualifications. This salary disparity has led to grievances and demonstrations among the workers. In addition, foreign workers enjoy better working conditions, including more days off, exacerbating the sense of inequality.

Addressing these issues of discrimination, adherence to the law, ethnic polarization, and corruption is crucial to realizing citizen participation and achieving peace in South Sudan. Deliberate steps need to be taken to ensure gender equality, equal opportunities, and fair treatment in resource governance. This includes promoting women's inclusion in the oil sector, providing education and training opportunities, and addressing salary disparities between foreign and local workers. Only by addressing these challenges can South Sudan move closer to achieving meaningful citizen participation and sustainable peace.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper observes that the level of citizen participation in the oil sector of South Sudan is very
minimal despite there being laws that support participation. The factors that have contributed to low citizen participation are lack of adherence to the law, corruption, ethnic polarisation, discrimination and gender imbalance, constant conflicts, and a lack of civic education.

This paper recommends that there should be political will to develop and implement legal provision that mandates public participation in the decision-making process related to oil. This should include laws that mandate public consultations, disclosure of information, and opportunities for public input.

Secondly, transparency and accountability should be enhanced transparency in the oil sector by implementing robust financial reporting mechanisms, including the disclosure of contracts, revenues, and expenditures. Strengthen accountability mechanisms to hold both government and oil companies responsible for their actions and ensure adherence to environmental and social standards.

Thirdly, there should be benefit-sharing that ensures that all citizens directly benefit from oil revenues through revenue-sharing mechanisms, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and social programs. This can help build trust and demonstrate the tangible benefits of citizen participation.

Lastly, the government should invest in capacity building to boost the capacity of civil society organizations, local communities, and citizens to effectively engage with the oil sector. This can include training programs, workshops, and technical assistance to enhance their understanding of the sector, legal frameworks, and negotiation skills.

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