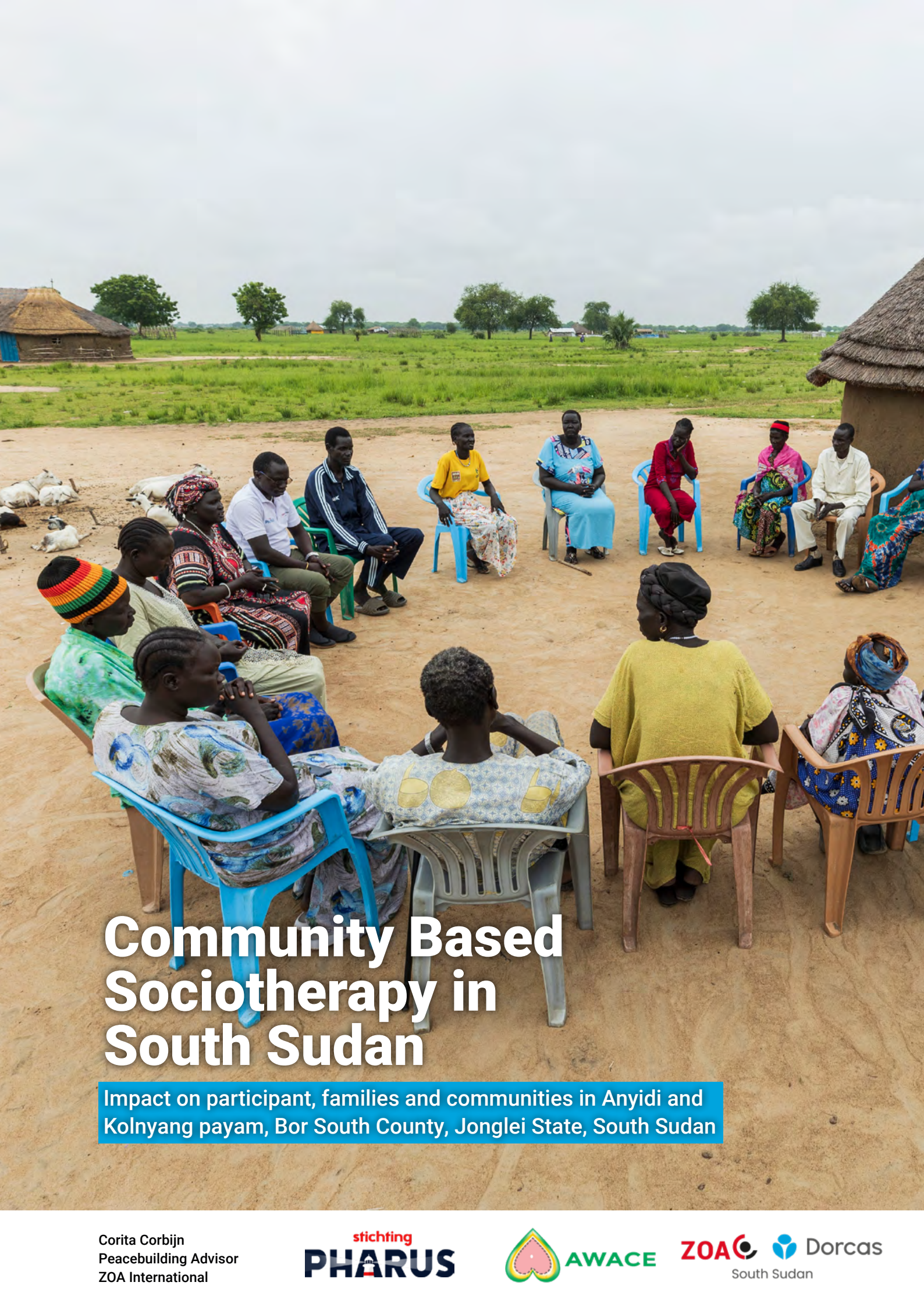


A group of approximately 15 people, including men and women of various ages, are sitting in a circle on a dirt ground. They are using plastic chairs in shades of blue and brown. The setting is a rural area with a flat, grassy landscape and several traditional huts with thatched roofs in the background. The sky is overcast. The people are dressed in a mix of traditional and modern clothing. Some women are wearing colorful patterned dresses and headwraps. One man is wearing a white polo shirt and khaki pants, and another is in a dark blue tracksuit. The overall atmosphere appears to be one of a community gathering or a group discussion.

Community Based Sociotherapy in South Sudan

Impact on participant, families and communities in Anyidi and Kolnyang payam, Bor South County, Jonglei State, South Sudan

Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Project context.....	3
1.2	Community Based Sociiotherapy	4
2	Methodology.....	5
3	What has been the effect of CBS on participants' lives, families and communities?	7
3.1	Mental well being.....	7
3.2	Family relations.....	9
3.3	Gender relations.....	10
3.4	Economic activities	11
3.5	Participation in community activities and meetings	12
3.6	Social cohesion and peace	13
3.7	Summary of the main "working elements" of CBS	14
3.8	Gaps and weaknesses in the implementation of CBS	16
4	Conclusions and recommendations	17
4.1	Conclusions	17
4.2	Recommendations to ZOA Dorcas and reflections for future programming.....	17
	Annex 1: Terms of References	19
	Annex 2: Questions for interviews and Focus Group Discussions.....	23

For more information about this research and the peacebuilding work of ZOA Dorcas in South Sudan please contact Corita Corbijn: c.corbijn@zoa.ngo or info@zoadorcas.ngo

1 Introduction

1.1 Project context

The 'Peace and Stability in South Sudan – Increasing Resilience in Bor South' project was implemented by ZOA Dorcas in partnership with AWACE (women led CSO based in Bor). Between January 2020 - to May 2025 the project was funded by the Pharus foundation. The project worked with the communities and local authorities towards increasing peace and stability in communities. ZOA Dorcas focused on an integral project approach that included peacebuilding, creating economic opportunities for young people, enhancing food security, and building resilience towards natural disasters (DRR) as well as promoting good governance; see the visual below.



The context of Bor South County is characterised by a history of violent conflicts and displacement due to violence and floodings. Since 2013 many people have left their original villages and have found refuge near Bor town and along the Bor-Juba Road close to the river Nile, where security has been relatively stable over the last years. They have settled and try to find new livelihood alternatives as the insecurity in the areas further away makes it difficult to farm or keep cattle. People have experienced traumatic events and find themselves living with

people with different (clan) backgrounds. It is in this context that ZOA Dorcas decided to implement Community Based Sociotherapy (CBS).

1.2 Community Based Sociotherapy

Key to the Community Based Sociotherapy (CBS) approach is the fact that CBS is community led and driven. In CBS, participants from one village form small groups to discuss topics that are of daily concern. The groups consist of 15 men and women and are guided by two well-trained volunteer facilitators from the community who receive a small incentive. The aim of this approach is to enable participants to learn and experience new constructive behaviour. This learning process will ultimately have a positive influence on their personal life as well as on their environment. However, this process takes time. Taking this into account, CBS uses a six-phase model (see figure below) and seven principles to guide the conversations in the small groups.

CBS is a new approach in South Sudan and ZOA Dorcas together with partner AWACE has adopted this approach since 2021 in two payams, Anyidi and Kolnyang, in Bor South County. In total 48 CBS facilitators have been trained who have facilitated 120 CBS groups (in 7 cycles of 15 weeks each) with over 1500 participants (majority women). AWACE is the key partner for CBS and AWACE staff has been trained as CBS trainers by the International Institute for Community Based Sociotherapy (IICBS), the expert organisation on CBS which has provided technical support. 8 CBS facilitators have also been trained as CBS trainers, and they are now able to train new facilitators.

During this final year of the project ZOA Dorcas conducted research on the contribution of CBS in the Pharus project to Peace and Stability in Bor South, Jonglei State, South Sudan (see the ToR in annex1).

This report will describe the methodology (2), the main findings (3) and conclusions and recommendations (4).



2 Methodology

The main research question is: how has CBS contributed to peace, social cohesion and conflict reduction?

The research considered the following questions to answer the main research question:

- How has CBS contributed to conflict reduction and peace? What type of conflicts (about what) and at which level (family, among neighbours, at boma level or beyond) have been reduced?
- To what extent and how has CBS contributed to improved mental health?
- What are other areas of impact of CBS (e.g. gender, economic development, participation in community activities)?
- What have been “working elements” in the CBS methodology that leads most to conflict reduction and peace?
- To what extent was the CBS approach adapted/accepted in the context?
- What have been gaps or weaknesses in the CBS implementation?
- What are recommendations for future programming on CBS?

The research methodology included:

- Analysis of the quantitative data collected for a CBS baseline and endline evaluation¹
- Qualitative research (interviews and FGD) with project participants (CBS participants, CBS facilitators) and key informants (local leaders, religious leaders, ministry of peacebuilding in Bor).
- Qualitative research (interviews) with family members and neighbours of CBS participants

A light version of Outcome Harvesting with CBS participants and CBS facilitators was integrated in the KII/FGD questionnaires (see annex 2). The 6 steps of Outcome Harvesting were not fully followed, but the questions included key elements of Outcome Harvesting:

- The respondents were asked an open question about the change they had experienced after having participated in the CBS group. It is only after this open question that respondents were asked to indicate if they had observed changes in specific domains of change and what kind of change. No pre-defined indicators were used in the research.
- The questions focused on changed behaviour (key element of Outcome Harvesting) but also on change in feelings and attitude.
- The significance of the change was not a separate question but was often mentioned as part of the observed change.

¹ For the full report of this quantitative evaluation see IICBS (2025) Community Based Sociiotherapy Impact Report South Sudan 2023 – 2024.

- Every respondent was asked how CBS had contributed to these changes, but also what other factors/actors had contributed.
- Substantiation was done through interviews with CBS facilitators, neighbours or family members of CBS participants, and with local leaders. However, no specific outcome statements were presented to these respondents, but they were asked more in general if they had seen changes in the behaviour/attitude of the CBS participant.

See the table below for the KII and FGD that were conducted during the field work on March 5 – 11, 2025. The KII and FGD were conducted by the lead researcher Corita Corbijn, ZOA HQ Peacebuilding advisor, in collaboration with Rebecca Achol and Abraham Manyok Aguer, AWACE staff who helped with the translation and conducted independent interviews.

	KII	FGD (max 8)	Observation
CBS participants in Anyidi and Kolnyang	3 men 8 women	2 mixed (6 men and 8 women) 1 young men (6 men) 1 IDP (3 men and 4 women)	
CBS facilitators in Anyidi and Kolnyang	2 men 2 women	2 mixed (6 men and 8 women)	
Community leaders (boma chiefs)	3 men 1 woman		Some community leaders were also CBS participants
Neighbours/family members of CBS participants	8 women		Some neighbours/family members were also CBS participants
Key informant (Ministry of Peacebuilding)	1 man		
Total	28	6	

The data collection was implemented according to plan without major obstacles or limitations. More women than men were interviewed. For the CBS participants this was in line with the planning as most CBS participants are women. However, it was planned to interview also male neighbours/family members, which was not possible for several reasons. As such, the research might have missed the observations (and substantiations) of these men on the changes of female participants. However, this has been compensated by interviewing other non-participants (e.g. community leaders and CBS facilitators).

3 What has been the effect of CBS on participants' lives, families and communities?

The focus of the research was to understand the impact of CBS on the participants and how CBS had contributed to the changes. Paragraphs 3.1 till 3.6 answer the first three research questions about these effects of CBS. Paragraph 3.7 summarises the main working elements of CBS and 3.8 the gaps and weaknesses of CBS.

Before asking about specific domains of change the respondents gave a spontaneous reaction on what they considered an important change after participating in a CBS group. The answers were all in line with the suggested domains of change which were identified based on earlier monitoring visits and experiences with CBS in other countries. There was no mention of completely different changes. In the paragraphs below the report gives for each domain of change a summary of the changes that were often mentioned and the "working elements" of CBS².

3.1 Mental well being

Participants were very clear about the positive impact of CBS on mental well-being. The CBS facilitators, but also neighbours and family members confirmed these changes. They can be clustered in the following interrelated effects:

Stress relief

Many participants mentioned that they found relief from stress related to family conflicts and poverty through sharing their experiences in the group and hearing the stories of other group members.

Emotional healing

Participants who had experienced difficult times (e.g. losing husband, displacement, violent conflict) found emotional healing in the CBS group. The group was a safe space to open up and share about the past, receive support and learn a new focus on the future (new life orientation).

"I was wounded inside, and thought that I could not live anymore, but I regained life and feel free. I was aggressive, but now I have peace in heart and body." (Male CBS participant)

Suicidal thoughts and prevention

Several examples were given about (mainly) female participants who wanted to commit suicide because of domestic violence, abandonment by the husband and poverty. Through the

² Please note that domains of change are often interrelated. For example when the mental well-being of the CBS participant has improved, this also has a positive effect on the family relation and vice versa. The distinction in domains of change is used for analytical purposes but real lives are not organized according to domains of change!

support of the CBS group, they regained new hope and found new ways to manage their emotions. The CBS phases of safety and care helped to discover how to stay safe and how to continue to take care of the family.

Empowerment and mental growth

Participants testified how they changed from hopelessness and isolation to agency and hope especially through the phase of care (I need to take care of my family) and new life orientation (I can do something).

"I'm a widow and before I was just living and waiting till our death. I thought life was short. I wanted to abandon the children. But now I learned that I had to do something myself. I started a business and feel less stressed. My children have now a normal life like others." (Female CBS participant)

Improved sense of belonging

Participants feel less isolated and more part of a community. Improved family and neighbourhood relations (see next domains of change) also contribute to this positive development. The CBS group provides emotional support and after the end of the 15 weeks individual participants continue to meet.

Increased self-awareness and behaviour change

Especially younger participants mentioned how the CBS groups helped them to understand their own feelings and manage their emotions in a better way. They mentioned better anger management, being more respectful to others and not responding when provoked into a fight.

"I loved fighting at the waterpoint, but this has now changed. I now think of what we discussed in CBS group and cool down. During safety we discussed that safety begins with you, and how to keep others safe, so we should not fight." (Female CBS participant)

These outcomes on mental well-being are in line with the findings of the quantitative survey³ which was conducted prior to this qualitative research. The survey included three (contextualised) sets of questions about mental health: SRQ- 20 (general mental distress), WHO-5 (psychosocial well-being) and PHQ-9 (symptoms of depression). All three indicators show an improvement for respondents after finishing the CBS groups in cycle 4 (these groups ended in July 2023) and CBS groups from cycle 5 (which ended in March 2024) compared to the baseline which was conducted before respondents started with the CBS group. A decrease in scoring for PHQ -9 and SRQ – 20 is an improvement while an increase in the scoring for the WHO – 5 index also indicates an improvement in well-being.

³ IICBS (2025) Community Based Socioterapy Impact Report South Sudan 2023 – 2024

Outcome Variable	Baseline cycle 4 (Mean)	Endline cycle 4 (Mean)	Endline cycle 5 (Mean)	Change Baseline cycle 4 – Endline cycle 4	Change Baseline cycle 4 – Endline cycle 5
PHQ-9 (Depression)	12.1	9.9	9.4	-2.2 (-18.2%)	-2.7 (-22.3%)
SRQ-20 (Mental Distress)	8.5	7.1	6.8	-1.4 (-16.5%)	-1.7 (-20.0%)
WHO-5 (Well-being)	50.9	55.3	56.8	+4.4 (+8.6%)	+5.9 (+11.6%)

3.2 Family relations

Family life in the project area has its challenges as a large part of the population is displaced due to insecurity from their villages to Bor Town or in villages closer to the main road. Their previous livelihood activities are restricted, and the family must rely on other income generating activities which are not easy to find. The husbands struggle to provide money for responding to the family needs which is seen as their responsibility, and alcoholism is a serious issue. This leads to a high level of family conflicts and domestic violence. There are also many female headed households who struggle to get by. Improved family life was often one of the first changes mentioned by CBS participants. These changes can be grouped as follows:

Improved communication and conflict resolution between family members

CBS groups played a significant role in resolving family conflicts, such as those between co-wives, and between husbands and wives. Through the group's discussions about care, respect and trust participants learned how to reconcile differences and build better relationships. Respect also extended to how participants interacted with children. Parents, for instance, noted how their relationship with children improved because they learned how to handle conflicts with a calmer mind.

"I did not know that peace starts at home. I thought peace was at government level. But now I can mediate conflicts which I could not before. I was often fighting with my wife and caning the children. But now there is no more fighting." (Male CBS participant)

Reduction in domestic violence and in alcohol abuse

Many women mentioned that they learned how to deal with their husbands when they were drunk and aggressive. The women's changed behaviour and new way of communication contributed in several cases to the husband reducing or abandoning alcohol and a reduction in domestic violence. Some men joined a CBS group as well.

"One lady in our group learned how to deal with her drunk husband. She changed and her husband also joined a CBS group and stopped drinking." (CBS facilitator)

Family members developing economic activities

Husbands, wives and children are developing economic activities to contribute to the family expenses. Especially the topics of care and new life orientation have helped the participants

to reflect on what they can do, and not to wait for other family members to earn money. This has not only brought more money to the family, reducing stress, but also has given new energy and a joint commitment to care for the family.

"I used to isolate myself from my wife and children because of poverty. During the phase of new life orientation, I decided to collect wood and sell logs in town. The money I used to buy food and pay school fees. Now I'm feeling free, and I can go to community meetings and church. I feel less stress. During new life orientation I learned that I could change my life, I should not wait for others to change me." (Male CBS participant)

3.3 Gender relations

The CBS groups are mixed with a majority of women (77%) while the CBS facilitators are always a mixed pair (1 woman and 1 man). The CBS methodology and principles have contributed to more equal gender relations according to the CBS participants. See below for concrete examples of these gender changes.

Equal participation in family and community

CBS promotes the principle of equality, where men and women sit together in circles, and everyone has an equal opportunity to speak. This challenges traditional gender roles where men dominated decision-making, allowing women to share their experiences and contribute equally to discussions, both in CBS groups and within their communities.

"Before women could not sit with men, but they do so in the CBS group which is mixed. Facilitators are both male and female. They all talk. Now ladies in the community can talk." (Male CBS participant)

Changes in family dynamics and decision making

CBS has contributed to shifting family dynamics, where decision-making is becoming more inclusive of women. Previously, men were the sole decision-makers, but now both men and women, as well as children, are involved more and more in family decisions.

"Before I had no idea about the rights of women, the man was the head of the family and decisions were made only by men. But through CBS I learned that women have rights. In my family we now all sit together to discuss. First my father and brother refused, but they have now accepted." (Male CBS participant)

Women gained confidence through practising in CBS group

Female participants, who were previously excluded from community meetings and decision-making, are now actively involved in these spaces. The mixed CBS groups provided a safe space for women to speak openly with men and to give advice to them. This experience has helped women gain confidence, enabling them to speak in public and engage in discussions that were traditionally dominated by men.

"Before women could not express their feelings to male in-laws, but now they can. I now feel free to talk, I learned this from the men in the CBS groups. CBS has removed my fear. Men say now that women have the right to talk." (Female CBS participant)

3.4 Economic activities

Many CBS participants had lost their traditional livelihood activities because of the displacement from the villages to town, and the continued insecurity prevents them from farming their far away land because of fear of attacks. Having to find alternative income generating activities is not easy. Humanitarian organisations have been providing food assistance creating a certain level of dependency on external support. CBS participants share how the CBS groups have helped them to engage in (new) economic activities.

Entrepreneurial mindset and starting economic activities

CBS groups provided members with advice on starting and engaging in economic activities, such as farming, trading, and small businesses. For example, some participants started farming or selling goods, and others began activities like collecting firewood or selling logs, all encouraged by the CBS group discussions on care and new life orientation. The CBS groups received 200 USD at the end of the 15 weeks and this money was often used for economic activities of the CBS participants, or to set up a Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA).

"I was just sitting under the tree and playing cards, I was lazy. During new life orientation I learned that you can change: let's do something. I bought salt and started making salted fish. I sold them and contributed to my family." (Young male CBS participant)

Empowerment through economic independence

Many participants reported feeling empowered by their ability to contribute financially to their families. The CBS participants mutual support and encouragement to start small economic activities helped them to transition from reliance on other family members to becoming more self-sufficient. For instance, one woman who initially struggled with a destructive relationship found the strength to start her own business and contribute to her household. Others, including young men, also realized they could take responsibility for their family's well-being by contributing to household income through various activities.

"A widow in the CBS group was stressed as her house was destroyed by flooding and she did not have capacity to rebuild the house. She was living with relatives, but this was very stressful. The CBS group members counselled her to start an economic activity (vegetable garden) to earn money and to build a small house. She did so and now she lives on her own and free from conflicts." (narrated by Male CBS participant)

More family members taking responsibility for the family

There was a clear shift in many families from being dependent on a single income earner to having multiple family members engaged in income-generating activities. This reduced stress and helped create more financial security and peace within households.

"I started farming with my family. My family had conflicts because of poverty, but now we can manage our food well. So peace is important for business and business brings peace in the family." (Male CBS participant)

3.5 Participation in community activities and meetings

Although increased community participation was not as frequently mentioned as changes in the family, several CBS participants did give examples of how they have become more active in their community.

Leadership and community engagement

CBS participants, women and men, have taken on leadership roles within their communities, particularly in managing communal resources like boreholes. They mediate conflicts and ensure equitable access to water, which has improved the functioning of the waterpoint. This shows an increase in active leadership and responsibility among CBS participants.

"Women leaders are now working together with men. Before we did not do this, we were afraid of what people would say if women were seen in public." (Female CBS participant and local leader)

Conflict resolution and mediation

CBS participants play a key role in mediating conflicts within the community, especially related to access to the boreholes, but also conflicts between neighbours or church members, and conflicts among children and youth. They have learned in the CBS groups to care for the community and take responsibilities beyond their direct family.

Increased confidence and leadership skills

CBS has helped individuals overcome personal fears and isolation. People who were once afraid to speak in public or participate in group discussions have gained confidence through CBS. This has enabled them to actively contribute to community meetings and discussions, indicating greater social participation and empowerment. Local leaders who participated in CBS groups testified that CBS helped them to improve their leadership skills. These leaders, once primarily focused on protecting their own people, now seek truth and fairness in resolving conflicts, ensuring that all parties are heard and treated equitably.

"CBS helped me to conduct community meetings in a better way, not replying to bad words in the meeting, and tell the truth." (Male CBS participant and local leader)

Encouraging equal participation

CBS has emphasized the idea that everyone, regardless of age, wealth, or clan background, has value and can contribute to community activities. Individuals who once felt they could not contribute, such as older community members, now understand that their participation is valuable.

"If there was a community call for activities I would not go, I thought I could not contribute as I'm already older. But now I learned that we can all contribute, poor and rich. I learned I have the same value as others, we are all human. I'm no longer in isolation." (Male CBS participant)

The findings above illustrate and confirm the findings from the quantitative survey⁴ which was conducted prior to this qualitative research. The Sense of Community Index (SCI) is a tool to measure how connected individuals feel to their community. It assesses four key dimensions: membership (feeling of belonging), influence (feeling of having a say and being influenced by the group), fulfilment of needs (meeting individual and group needs), and shared emotional connection (bonding through shared experiences). Higher scores consistently reflect greater social cohesion, trust, and community engagement, which are essential for long-term peace and resilience. The SCI includes 24 items, and the maximum score is 96. The SCI shows an improvement for CBS participants after they participated in the CBS groups, see the table below.

Variable	Baseline cycle 4 (Mean)	Endline cycle 4 (Mean)	Endline cycle 5 (Mean)	Change Baseline cycle 4 – Endline cycle 4	Change Baseline cycle 4 – Endline cycle 5
SCI Overall	43.9	47.1	48.5	+3.2 (+7.3%)	+4.6 (+10.5%)
Reinforcement of Needs	10.8	11.6	12.0	+0.8 (+7.4%)	+1.2 (+11.1%)
Membership	11.2	12.0	12.4	+0.8 (+7.1%)	+1.2 (+10.7%)
Influence	10.5	11.2	11.6	+0.7 (+6.7%)	+1.1 (+10.5%)
Shared Emotional Connection	11.4	12.3	12.5	+0.9 (+7.9%)	+1.1 (+9.6%)

3.6 Social cohesion and peace

The level of (violent) conflicts at family, neighbourhood and community level is high due to for example scarce water resources, and economic stress in the family. Due to the conflicts and subsequent displacements, people from different Dinka clans are now living in the same area, while also Nuer and Anuak have found refuge in Bor town. This ethnic diversity is a potential breeding place for conflicts. One of the most frequently mentioned domains of change after participating in a CBS group is social cohesion and peace. In this volatile context this domain is a very relevant outcome area.

Reduction in conflicts

CBS has played a significant role in reducing conflicts within communities, including at common points like the borehole, between families, and among clans. Participants highlight a decrease in fighting, especially where there was once frequent violence over water. CBS participants intervene to mediate and de-escalate tensions, helping prevent conflicts from

⁴ IICBS (2025) Community Based Socioterapy Impact Report South Sudan 2023 – 2024.

escalating into violence. Discussions about safety and care helped participants to realise that peace begins at home, and that they can contribute to mediate conflicts.

Promoting social cohesion

CBS groups bring together individuals from different gender, age groups and clans. This fostered a sense of unity and cooperation. The shared experiences within the group helped build trust and mutual respect among the group members, but they also encouraged participants to reach out to other people Bor town who are from different clans. This change also contributes to community participation as described in 3.4.

"We have Dinka from Anyidi and from Twic East in our CBS group. The discussions about care and respect helped me to live in Bor with other people who are not from Anyidi. We are all neighbours, and we all have experienced displacement." (Female CBS participant)

Changing social norms on violence and revenge

CBS has contributed to a shift in social morals, where violence is no longer seen as the solution to problems. Participants report a growing realization that peaceful coexistence is more beneficial than conflict, and many now actively avoid violence. Discussions about safety raised the awareness that each person has a responsibility in keeping him/herself safe, and that violence comes with a cost. Participants now describe feeling safer and more secure in their communities. The emphasis on safety and care in CBS meetings has led individuals to value peace and reconciliation over revenge and hostility, even in the aftermath of violent events like killings.

"We thought that fighting was the solution for everything. But now we have a peaceful environment." (Female CBS participant)

"I used to be rude and not forgiving. In 2013 Nuer killed my relatives and I wanted to have revenge. In 2024 I went to Juba and I told the Nuer that I will forgive them. This is thanks to CBS and our discussions about safety and care." (Male CBS participant).

3.7 Summary of the main "working elements" of CBS

In the previous paragraphs the report describes the different domains of change of CBS and how CBS has contributed to these changes, according to the CBS participants and facilitators. These different "working elements" in the CBS methodology can be summarised as follows:

Sharing with each other

CBS is often translated into the Dinka language as *Akut de room de wel* translated into English as "sharing with each other". Participants value strongly the practice of sharing experiences and struggles with each other. It helps them realise that others also face similar problems, which allows for mutual support and advice-giving. They feel that they are not alone in their struggles and the shared stories help them to reflect on their own feelings and behaviour. The facilitators are not teachers who are the experts but guide the discussions.

"We do the introduction of each session in a circle, where we always ask how people have left their families, and encourage each other; otherwise you cannot focus on the group discussion." (Male CBS facilitator)

Having a mixed and safe group for 15 weeks

The CBS group has a mixed composition with women and men, young and old, people from different clans, displaced people and residents participating. The principle of equality of all participants is practiced for example through the sitting arrangement in a circle and the opportunity for all to talk. The group meets for 15 weeks, 1 session per week, so it is not a one-off activity. These regular meetings over a period of 15 weeks are needed to build trust. Several participants mentioned that they were not open during the first sessions but only started to share after session three or four when they felt safe in the group. The mixed group gave them a platform to practice new behaviour like women speaking out in a group of women and men. The group was also a place to ask questions, to share personal stories and to get advice.

"The church is preaching about peace, but we can only listen. In CBS we can talk and share our experiences so that you don't forget. CBS is preaching and practising." (Female CBS participant)

The structured application of the different phases

Each CBS group talks about safety, trust, care, respect, new life orientation and memories. Especially safety, care and new life orientation were frequently mentioned by the participants as crucial topics that helped them change their behaviour and attitude. The topic of safety enabled discussions about what you can do to keep yourself and your family safe. Care referred to how to take care of yourself, your family and your community, and to take responsibility. New life orientation was the topic that was seen as the most powerful topic. It helped participants to reflect on how to leave the past behind and to take initiatives for improving the current situation.

"We discussed new life orientation: I thought that life could not change but you can change also when your life started bad. You can change your life yourself, stopping conflicts will improve your life." (Male CBS participant)

The capacity of the CBS facilitators and the commitment of partner AWACE

The described working elements above are mentioned by the CBS participants and facilitators. An additional factor that contributed to the effectiveness of CBS are the in-depth training of the CBS facilitators by IICBS⁵: they received a 15 day basic training, 1 week refresher training, 10 days intermediate training and 5 days advanced training. During the CBS sessions they met during debrief meetings where they could share their challenges and give each other advice. The CBS facilitators are therefore well trained and personally experienced the same phases as the participants, which often led to changed behaviour among the CBS facilitators as well. 10

⁵ IICBS is the International Institute of Community Based Socioterapy (www.icbs.ngo) who provided technical support to ZOA Dorcas and who provided the first training sessions of the CBS facilitators.

CBS facilitators have now been trained as trainers, and they have trained new CBS facilitators. They are a valuable pool of trainers that can be used for future training.

AWACE is the local CBS partner of ZOA Dorcas, based in Bor. The AWACE staff has been trained together with the CBS facilitators and graduated to CBS trainers. They are passionate about CBS and have played a key role in the monitoring and supervision of the CBS facilitators.

3.8 Gaps and weaknesses in the implementation of CBS

The study did not bring out any weaknesses or gaps in the CBS methodology, for example the phases were all relevant and they were not considered as too complicated by the CBS participants or facilitators. The period of 15 weeks with a weekly session of 2-3 hours was also found to be realistic, although some groups decided to meet twice a week for a shorter session.

CBS participants asked ZOA Dorcas **to provide water or soda during the CBS sessions** as is common practice during training sessions organised by NGOs. However, the CBS methodology does not allow this support as it builds on the intrinsic motivation of the CBS participant for the sessions. The lack of water (or other material support) did not cause dropouts. Some groups found it difficult to find a meeting place especially during rainy season. Overall, the level of drop out was rather limited (3% who participated in less than 13 sessions). Most of the dropouts were men who had expected to get money during the sessions and/or who were engaged in other economic activities.

After the 15 sessions a so-called conviviality meeting was organised where the CBS group invited community members to share what they have learned. Each group received 200 USD to organise this closing meeting, but the group could also decide to use (part of) the money for individual or **joint economic activity**. However, the groups were not well prepared on the development of a joint activity, and no group had started an activity at the time of the research. The groups did have an interest in continuing to meet and many groups wished to start a **Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA)**. ZOA Dorcas had selected a limited number of groups and provided them with VSLA kits – training did not yet start at the time of writing this report.

CBS has been **implemented in isolation from other interventions** in the Pharus project in the same boma and payam. For example, the Peace Committees and Peace Promoters, which were supported in the same Pharus project, were not well known while their work is closely connected to CBS. This is a missed opportunity for synergy and referrals.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Chapter 4 describes the multiple effects of Community Based Sociotherapy in the payams of Anyidi and Kolnyang. The CBS methodology was new in South Sudan, and in Jonglei state, but it has proven to be **effective and relevant** in this context of violent conflicts and displacement. This qualitative research illustrates its impact on participants, their families and communities in Bor South County. CBS has a **strong positive effect** on individual well-being, the family life and the neighbourhood as also confirmed by relatives and neighbours of CBS participants. The CBS participants also influence others through their advice and example, spreading the effects to a larger group. A strong gender effect was also observed, mainly thanks to the emphasis on the phases and the discussions in a mixed group. Conflicts were addressed at the family and neighbourhood level, but less at a higher level (boma/payam level). Changes around economic activities strongly contributed to improved mental well-being and family life.

"We heard about peace since 1992 but we didn't understand peace. But with 15 weeks of CBS we now understand." (CBS participants)

The CBS approach was **adapted to and accepted in the context**. The facilitators were speaking Dinka and coming from the communities. They did not use complicated textbooks but followed the different phases which were contextualised during the training of the CBS facilitators to make them relevant for the Bor context.

The CBS groups contributed to cultural changes e.g. the role of women in the family and the community. However, resistance from men, customary leaders or church leaders to these changes was not mentioned by CBS participants or leaders. There might be more resistance if CBS would be implemented in villages further away from Bor town, which has already a larger exposure to new gender ideas and NGO presence. This shows that CBS was also able to successfully challenge existing gender norms and values in the context and contribute to gender changes.

4.2 Recommendations to ZOA Dorcas and reflections for future programming

- CBS could target specifically people in leadership (local chiefs, local authorities, leaders of CBOs) to have more impact at a higher level. This might require an adaptation of the CBS methodology, e.g. in Liberia and DRC specific CBS sessions were organised for leaders bringing them together (2 times 5 days).
- The sustainability of CBS could be improved when targeting churches and schools. The CBS facilitators, who receive an incentive from ZOA Dorcas, will in most cases stop facilitating when the project ends. It would be worthwhile to reflect if church leaders and schoolteachers could be trained as CBS facilitators who can organise CBS sessions in their church or schools. In Liberia ZOA has experience with CBS in schools.

- Young men are facing many challenges and are often considered as troublemakers in the community. The number of young men in the CBS groups however was relatively low while those who did participate were enthusiastic about the CBS groups and their personal changes. CBS could target more specifically these young men.
- Currently there is a pool of CBS trainers available in Bor and AWACE is committed to continue with CBS. Make use of the existing pool of CBS trainers and support in AWACE in fundraising for CBS interventions.
- The CBS groups have become a strong group where the members trust each other. These groups can be a good foundation for other joint economic activities like VSLAs. Such an activity also helps the group to continue meeting each other and keeping the “CBS phases” alive.
- Create more synergy between CBS and other project activities e.g. through targeting participants in other project interventions for the CBS groups, or making referrals from CBS group members to Peace Committees and livelihood interventions.

Annex 1: Terms of References

Terms of Reference: Research on the contribution of Community Based Sociotherapy in the Pharus project to Peace and Stability in Bor South

1. Introduction / background

ZOA Dorcas South Sudan emerged from the cooperation agreement between ZOA and Dorcas International in 2022. ZOA and Dorcas have both been individually present in South Sudan since 1998 and 2008, respectively. Our complementary expertise and geographical coverage enable us to achieve more impact in reaching those most affected by crises.

ZOA Dorcas is operational in 4 States and one administrative area in South Sudan. ZOA Dorcas presence in South Sudan consists of two programme Offices: 1) Jonglei and Great Pibor Area (GPA) programme, 2) Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazala and Warrap states Programme office. The National Office is in Juba.



The 'Peace and Stability in South Sudan – Increasing Resilience in Bor South' project is implemented by ZOA Dorcas in partnership with AWACE (women led CSO based in Bor) and funded by Pharus from January 2020 - to May 2025. The project works with the communities towards increasing peace and stability in communities and engage local authorities. ZOA Dorcas focuses on an integral project approach that includes peacebuilding, creating opportunities for young people, enhancing food security, and building resilience towards natural disasters (DRR) as well as promoting good governance, see the visual below.

The project improves the wellbeing of women and men in Bor South, and reduce inter-and intra-communal conflict and instability through achieving the objectives of the project as below:

- Goal: Increasing peace and stability in communities in Bor South
- Result area 1: Reduction in the degree and intensity of conflict, improved social cohesion and positive peace within and between communities.
- Result area 2: Youth have increased income-generating opportunities and can build towards a resilient future through acquired skills and increased resources.
- Result area 3: farmers produce sufficient basic food items for their consumption and farm produce for sale
- Result area 4: Strengthening local capacity and resilience to mitigate the impact of climate shocks/change and natural disasters.
- Cross-cutting theme: Strengthening local government effectiveness in Bor (up to state-level) in peacebuilding, creating youth opportunities, food security and disaster risk reduction.

During this final year of the project ZOA Dorcas wants to engage in research aiming to bring out results and lessons learned on specific topics. Apart from this research a final external evaluation covering all project results and the OECD/DAC criteria will be commissioned for which a separate ToR has been developed. The scope of this document is the research on the contribution of Community Based Sociotherapy in the Pharus project to Peace and Stability in Bor South⁶.

The lead researcher for this research is the ZOA HQ Peacebuilding Advisor, Corita Corbijn. AWACE staff Manyok Abraham and Rebecca Achol will participate in the research as well.

2. Research questions

The **main research question** is: **how has CBS contributed to peace, social cohesion and conflict reduction?**

The research should consider the following questions⁷ to answer the main research question:

- What type of conflicts (about what) and at which level (family, among neighbours, at boma level or beyond) have been reduced?
- To what extent and how has CBS contributed to improved mental health?
- What are other areas of impact of CBS (e.g. gender, economic development, civic participation)?
- What have been “working elements” in the CBS methodology that leads most to conflict reduction and peace?
- What are gaps or weaknesses in the CBS implementation?

⁶ Other research will focus on the contribution of the Food Security & Livelihood interventions to the resilience of youth to violence and conflict, as well as the effectiveness of Peace Committees and Peace Promoters

⁷ The researcher and AWACE staff can also propose additional questions that are important in order to answer the main research question

3. Expected Results / Deliverables

Main deliverables expected from the consultant includes:

- Inception report
- Research report of max 10 pages (excluding annexes)
- Research summary brief/booklet
- Presentation during Closing & learning event

4. Methodology

The research methodology will include at least:

1. Analysis of the CBS evaluation
2. Qualitative research (interviews/FGD) with project participants (CBS participants, CBS facilitators, ZOA Dorcas and AWACE staff) and key informants (local leaders, religious leaders, ministry of peacebuilding in Bor,).
3. Qualitative research (interviews) with family members/neighbours of CBS participants
For 2 and 3: Light Outcome Harvesting/Most Significant Change exercise with CBS participants, CBS facilitators, as well as other community members + leaders

5. Timing / proposed schedule of activities

The timeline here is for the research processes. The research should start not later than mid-March 2025 and the final version of research report should be made available by end of April 2025 so that the final evaluation can use the findings. See tentative summary of schedule for evaluation process in the table below.

Tentative Timetable

Date	Activities/Tasks
February 22	Inception report including research design.
March 3 - 8	Field work including presentation/ consultation of preliminary findings with ZOA Dorcas field team
April 4	Submission of first draft report for ZOA Dorcas for review
April 17, 2025	Presentation of findings and recommendations to ZOA Dorcas team
April 21, 2025	ZOA Dorcas team provides feedback on draft report, for incorporation
April 25, 2025	Submission of Final Research Report and Research summary brief

6. (Team) Roles

ZOA Dorcas MEAL team is the lead of the proposed study. A panel consisting of ZOA Dorcas senior management team including Manager of Programme Quality (MPQ), Director of Programmes (DoP), and Programme Manager (PGM) as well as the ZOA HQ global learning advisor will be involved in the process

of reviewing the inception report, the draft report and research summary brief, approval of the final research report summary brief.

Specific duties of ZOA Dorcas:

The major roles and responsibilities of ZOA Dorcas includes:

- Provision of relevant information and documents of the project
- Covering the costs of consultancy fee, flight tickets, and other transportation, as per agreement (signed ToR).
- Facilitate visa process and travel documents to the field for data collection.
- ZOA Dorcas will facilitate logistics for the researcher (from ZOA HQ) and recruit the local assistant for the research. All costs related to assistant will be covered by ZOA Dorcas.
- Provision of necessary security updates and guidance during the stay of the ZOA HQ Peacebuilding Advisor in South Sudan/Countries if need.
- Provide feedback on the inception report, tools, and draft report. Upon satisfaction, approve the tools and reports.

Specific Duties of the ZOA HQ Peacebuilding Advisor (research lead):

She will:

- Review key project documents necessary for the research
- Develop design of the research and submit inception report along with data collection tools
- Conduct field work
- Keep ZOA Dorcas updated on the field work
- Present the findings to those involved from ZOA Dorcas
- Provide a draft report in line with the terms of reference and the feedback received during the presentation.
- Submit final report addressing comments from ZOA Dorcas
- Submit any other documents or reports as reflected in the deliverables.

Specific duties of the AWACE staff:

They will:

- Translate during interviews and FGD conducted by the research lead
- Support logistical arrangements during field work (communication with respondents etc)
- Provide context specific background information about peace and conflict
- Actively participate in analysis of collected information (during the field visit)
- Conduct separate interviews with respondents where applicable

Annex 2: Questions for interviews and Focus Group Discussions

CBS facilitators

1. General/introduction

- a. What motivated you to become CBS facilitators? How many groups/cycles have you facilitated?
- b. What have you enjoyed/appreciated most in their work as CBS facilitator?

2. Effects of CBS groups (Outcome Harvesting)

- a. What has been the effect of CBS in the life of the CBS participants? In which area have you observed changes in thinking/attitude/behaviour? First ask without giving categories, then ask specifically for the different categories
- b. At which level: individual (mental well-being)/family/relations with other people in the community/economic development/active participation in community activities or groups?
- c. Has CBS groups contributed to change in gender norms and practices (roles of men/women, how they relate), at different levels?
- d. To what extent has CBS contributed to more peace/social cohesion/less conflicts in the community?

3. Working elements/CBS methodology (Outcome Harvesting)

- a. What has contributed to these changes? Which element in the CBS methodology (topic/phase/exercise) or which principle?
- b. What else (so not the CBS group) contributed to the changes?

4. Reflection on the CBS methodology

- a. What was challenging in the CBS group and methodology? What made it difficult for the CBS participants?
- b. Do you know people who dropped out of the CBS groups and why they left?
- c. Is the CBS methodology adapted to the context? And accepted in the context?
- d. What was challenging for you as CBS facilitator? And what worked well?
- e. What do you see as the strengths of the CBS methodology? And its weaknesses or gaps?

5. Sustainability

- a. Are the CBS groups continuing after the 15 weeks? If so, how and why?
- b. Do you plan to continue as facilitator after the project ends?

6. Recommendations

- a. If ZD would start new CBS groups in another payam, what should ZD do differently? Or what should ZD continue to do?

CBS participants

1. Member of CBS group

- a. How did you hear about CBS and why did you decide to become a CBS participant?
- b. What did you expect and did the activity meet your expectations?
- c. What do you still remember/value from the CBS group?
- d. Are you also involved in other project activities?

2. Effects of CBS groups (Outcome Harvesting)

- a. What do you still remember and value from the CBS groups? Which phase/topic?
- b. What has been the effect of CBS in your life? In which area have you changed your thinking/attitude/behaviour? First ask without giving categories, then ask specifically for the different categories
- c. At which level: individual (mental well-being)/family/relations with other people in the community/economic development/active participation in community activities or groups?
- d. Has CBS groups contributed to change in gender norms and practices (roles of men/women, how they relate), at different levels?
- e. To what extent has CBS contributed to more peace/social cohesion/less conflicts in the community?

3. Project contribution/Working elements (Outcome Harvesting)

- a. What has contributed to these changes? Which element in the CBS methodology (topic/phase/exercise) or which principle?
- b. What else (so not the CBS group) contributed to the changes?

4. Reflection on the CBS methodology

- a. What was challenging in the CBS group and methodology? What made it difficult for you?
- b. Do you know people who dropped out of the CBS groups and why they left?
- c. Is the CBS methodology adapted to the context? And accepted in the context?
- d. What do you see as the main strengths of the CBS methodology? And main weaknesses?

5. Sustainability

- a. To what extent is your CBS group still meeting/operational? With which activities?
- b. If the group is no longer meeting, would you have liked to continue with the group? And why did it not happen? And/or do you still meet with CBS group members?

6. Recommendations

- a. If ZD would start new CBS groups in another payam, what should ZD do differently? Or what should ZD continue to do?

Neighbours/family members of CBS participants

1. General/introduction

- a. Who participated in the CBS group and when?
- b. Have you also participated in a CBS group? If not, why not?

2. Effects of CBS groups

- a. What changes have you seen in the life of the CBS participant (behaviour/attitude)? First ask without giving categories, then ask specifically for the different categories
- b. At which level: individual (mental well-being)/family including gender/relations with other people in the community/economic development/active participation in community activities or groups?
- c. Do you know what (in the CBS group) contributed to these changes?
- d. To what extent has CBS contributed to more peace/social cohesion/less conflicts in the community?

Local leaders (church leaders/local community leaders etc)

1. General/introduction

- a. What do you know about the CBS groups in your community?
- b. Have you been a member?

2. Effects of CBS groups

- a. What has been the effect of CBS in the life of the CBS participants? In which area have you observed changes in thinking/attitude/behaviour? First ask without giving categories, then ask specifically for the different categories
- b. At which level: individual (mental well-being)/family/relations with other people in the community/economic development/active participation in community activities or groups?
- c. Has CBS groups contributed to change in gender norms and practices (roles of men/women, how they relate), at different levels?
- d. To what extent has CBS contributed to changes at the community level eg more peace/social cohesion/less conflicts in the community?

3. Working elements/CBS methodology

- a. What has contributed to these changes? Which element in the CBS methodology (topic/phase/exercise/principle)?
- b. What else (so not the CBS group) contributed to the changes?
- c. What are strong elements and weaknesses of the CBS methodology/groups?
- d. What makes the CBS groups/methodology different from other similar projects/interventions?

4. Sustainability

- a. Are the CBS groups continuing after the 15 weeks? If so, how and why?

5. Recommendations

- a. Do you think that CBS is an effective/appropriate intervention in your community? Is the CBS methodology adapted to the context?
- b. If ZD would start new CBS groups in another payam, what should ZD do differently? Or what should ZD continue to do?