

Football for Peace in South Sudan: A Comprehensive Case Study

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Executive Summary

This comprehensive case study examines the potential of football as a peacebuilding instrument in South Sudan, with particular focus on the Bhar El Ghazal region. Drawing from firsthand experience as Technical Coach for Tonj South County and founder of Red Flames FC, this analysis presents evidence from five regional football initiatives to propose a transformative mixed-team model for sustainable peace through sport.

The research reveals that while traditional county-based tournaments often reinforce ethnic and regional divisions, innovative approaches that deliberately mix players across communities show remarkable promise for fostering unity. The successful implementation of the Tonj Super League in 2025, which I keenly observe concrete evidence that cross-community football initiatives can transcend traditional boundaries when properly structured and managed.

The proposed Bhar El Ghazal Counties Peace Tournament (BCPT) model offers a scalable framework that could transform regional dynamics by creating 23 mixed-player teams representing unified Bhar El Ghazal identity rather than narrow county allegiances. This approach addresses persistent challenges of corruption, bias, and violence that have undermined previous initiatives while establishing sustainable governance structures for long-term impact.

1. Introduction and Context

South Sudan's journey toward nationhood has been marked by persistent internal conflicts that extend far beyond political disagreements into the very fabric of community life. As someone who has worked directly in football development through FC Black Devil (Kenya), KYSA (Kenya) Red Flames FC (South Sudan) and served as Technical Coach for Tonj South County, I have witnessed both the divisive potential of poorly managed sporting competitions and the remarkable unifying power of well-structured football initiatives.

The Bhar El Ghazal region, encompassing 23 counties across South Sudan's northwest, represents a microcosm of the nation's broader challenges. Ethnic diversity, historical grievances, resource competition, and weak governance structures have created an environment where communal tensions frequently escalate into violence. Yet this same region has also demonstrated remarkable resilience and innovation in seeking peaceful solutions to these challenges.

Football, as the most popular sport across all communities in South Sudan, offers unique opportunities for peacebuilding that other interventions cannot match. Unlike political negotiations or economic development programs that may take years to show results, football can create immediate shared experiences that transcend ethnic, religious, and regional boundaries. However, as this study will demonstrate, the mere presence of football is insufficient – the structure, governance, and intentional design of football initiatives determine whether they contribute to peace or inadvertently reinforce divisions.

Author's Insight: *Through my work with Titans FC, FC Black Devil & KYSA, I have observed that young players from different ethnic backgrounds naturally form bonds when placed in integrated team environments. The challenge lies in creating systems that sustain these relationships beyond individual matches or tournaments.*

2. Theoretical Framework for Sport-for-Peace

The academic literature on sport-for-development and peace (SDP) provides important theoretical foundations for understanding how football can contribute to conflict transformation. Contact theory, developed by Gordon Allport, suggests that sustained contact between different groups under optimal conditions can reduce prejudice and build understanding. Football creates these optimal conditions through:

- **Equal status interaction:** On the field, players are judged by skill and contribution rather than ethnic or regional identity
- **Common goals:** Team success requires cooperation across traditional divisions
- **Institutional support:** Well-designed tournaments provide official endorsement for cross-community collaboration
- **Repeated interaction:** League formats create sustained relationships rather than one-off encounters

Social identity theory further explains how football can reshape group loyalties. When individuals identify strongly with a football team that includes members from different ethnic groups, their social identity expands beyond narrow ethnic boundaries. This process, known as identity fusion, can create lasting changes in attitudes and behaviors.

However, sport can also reinforce negative stereotypes and escalate conflicts when poorly managed. Research from other post-conflict contexts, including Rwanda, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, demonstrates that successful sport-for-peace initiatives require careful attention to program design, governance structures, and ongoing evaluation.

***Practical Application:** In designing the Tonj Super League, the organizers deliberately applied these theoretical principles by ensuring mixed teams, rotating training locations across communities, and establishing clear codes of conduct that emphasized respect and unity.*

3. Current Challenges in South Sudan's Regional Football

South Sudan's regional football landscape faces systemic challenges that undermine both sporting excellence and peacebuilding potential. Through my experience coaching at county level and observing tournaments across multiple regions, I have identified several persistent problems:

3.1 Governance and Organizational Weaknesses

Most regional tournaments suffer from inadequate governance structures that lack transparency, accountability, and sustainability. Decision-making processes are often dominated by political figures or ethnic elites, leading to perceptions of bias and unfairness. The absence of standardized rules, referee training, and disciplinary procedures creates environments where disputes escalate into broader conflicts.

3.2 Financial Mismanagement and Corruption

Limited resources combined with weak oversight mechanisms create opportunities for corruption that undermine tournament credibility. Funds intended for equipment, venue preparation, or prize money are frequently misappropriated, leading to incomplete tournaments and disappointed communities. This pattern of financial mismanagement has contributed to the collapse of several promising initiatives.

3.3 Ethnic and Regional Bias in Team Formation

Traditional tournament formats that align teams with specific counties or ethnic groups often reinforce rather than transcend existing divisions. When teams become vehicles for expressing ethnic pride or settling historical grievances, football matches can intensify rather than reduce tensions between communities.

3.4 Security and Safety Concerns

The combination of high emotions, ethnic tensions, and inadequate security arrangements has led to violence at numerous tournaments. Spectator confrontations, player disputes, and referee attacks create unsafe environments that discourage participation and undermine peacebuilding objectives.

3.5 Limited Infrastructure and Resources

Poor playing fields, inadequate equipment, and lack of basic facilities limit the quality of competition and create additional sources of dispute between participating communities. Unequal access to resources reinforces perceptions of favoritism and unfair treatment.

Personal Observation: During my tenure as Technical Coach for Tonj South both in Warrap and Bhar el Ghazal Peace Tournaments, I witnessed firsthand how these challenges manifested in local tournaments. The turning point is through the team composition and governance structure could address multiple problems simultaneously.

4. Case Study Analysis of Five Regional Tournaments

This section examines five recent football initiatives across South Sudan, analyzing their approaches, outcomes, and lessons learned. These cases provide the empirical foundation for the recommendations presented later in this study.

4.1 Naath Peace Tournament (2024)

Context: The Naath Peace Tournament was designed to unite 16 counties with predominantly Nuer populations through a culturally linked sporting platform. The tournament aimed to address internal conflicts within Nuer communities while building broader unity.

Structure: Traditional county-based teams competing in a knockout format with peace messaging integrated into opening and closing ceremonies.

Outcomes: The tournament collapsed prematurely in 2024 without completing the final stages or awarding prizes, leaving participating communities disappointed and skeptical about future initiatives.

Key Failure Factors:

- Fragmented governance with unclear decision-making authority
- Inadequate funding and financial management systems
- Security challenges that organizers could not effectively address
- Lack of contingency planning for disruptions
- Insufficient community consultation in tournament design

Lessons Learned: Cultural affinity alone is insufficient to ensure tournament success. Strong institutional frameworks and sustainable funding mechanisms are essential prerequisites for any large-scale football initiative.

4.2 Monyomiji Football Tournament (Eastern Equatorians)

Context: The Monyomiji Tournament sought to unite Eastern Equatorian communities through regional football competition, building on shared cultural and linguistic ties.

Structure: County-based teams representing different Eastern Equatorian communities in a league format with playoff rounds.

Outcomes: The tournament achieved high levels of community engagement and participation, with successful completion of multiple seasons. However, organizational challenges and persistent inter-community rivalries limited deeper peace dividends.

Strengths:

- Strong community participation and enthusiasm
- Relatively stable organizational structure
- Regular completion of tournament cycles
- Positive youth engagement

Limitations:

- County-based team structure reinforced rather than transcended local divisions
- Limited cross-community integration in team composition
- Operational inefficiencies in logistics and scheduling
- Difficulty translating sporting success into lasting peace outcomes

4.3 Lakes State Olympic (2021-2025)

Context: Conceived as a comprehensive sporting festival for Lakes State counties, this initiative aimed to create an "Olympic-style" event that would showcase local talent while promoting unity.

Structure: Multi-sport competition including football, with county-based representation and medal ceremonies modeled on international Olympic Games.

Outcomes: The event which had its first edition ended successful and was interrupted in the second edition (2023). Despite completing several tournament cycles and generating significant community interest, it collapsed until this year (2025) when the final was played between Yirol East and Rumbek Central.

Analysis: The Lakes State Olympic demonstrated both the potential and limitations of ambitious sporting initiatives in post-conflict contexts. While the Olympic branding created excitement and attracted participation, the underlying structural problems that plague regional tournaments remained unaddressed.

Critical Weaknesses:

- Inadequate institutionalization with no sustainable organizational framework
- Over-reliance on uncertain sponsorship and government support
- Limited security and crowd management capabilities

- Lack of systematic evaluation and improvement processes

4.4 Twic Mayardit County Twice Peace Tournament

Context: This county-level initiative organized competition among six payams (sub-counties) within Twic Mayardit, with explicit peace-building objectives.

Structure: Payam-based teams competing in a structured league format with strong local leadership and community oversight.

Outcomes: Reported as highly successful, with consistent completion of tournament cycles and positive community feedback.

Success Factors:

- Strong local leadership with clear authority and accountability
- Manageable scale that supported effective coordination
- Clear governance structures with community buy-in
- Integration of peace messaging with concrete youth engagement
- Realistic resource requirements matched to available funding

Significance: This case demonstrates that successful football-for-peace initiatives are possible when scale, governance, and community engagement are properly balanced.

4.5 Tonj Super League (2025) - Author's Direct Experience

Context: As a fan who neutrally watched the design and implementation of this initiative, I can provide my observed detailed insights into what made this tournament successful. The Tonj Super League was organized at Buluk Technical Training Ground, featuring six teams with players drawn from Tonj East, Tonj South, and Tonj North counties.

Innovative Structure: Unlike other tournaments that maintained county-based teams, we deliberately mixed players from all three Tonj counties into six balanced teams. This approach aimed to reduce local biases while maintaining competitive balance.

Implementation Process:

- Comprehensive player registration from all three counties
- Transparent draft process to create balanced teams
- Neutral venue selection to avoid favoring any county
- Professional referee training and standardized rules
- Community engagement through local sponsorship
- Security planning with local authorities

Outcomes: The tournament was successfully completed in 2025 with high levels of participation, minimal incidents, and positive community feedback.

***Personal Reflection:** The success of the Tonj Super League validated my hypothesis that mixed-team formats could address many of the problems plaguing traditional tournaments. Players initially expressed skepticism about playing with rivals from other counties, but by the end of the tournament, many had formed lasting friendships across traditional boundaries.*

Key Success Factors:

- **Mixed-team composition:** Players could not simply represent their home counties, forcing cross-community collaboration
- **Professional organization:** Clear rules, qualified referees, and consistent standards reduced disputes
- **Neutral governance:** Decision-making authority was distributed among representatives from all three counties
- **Community ownership:** Local businesses and organizations provided sponsorship, creating stakeholder investment
- **Realistic scope:** The tournament was designed within available resources and organizational capacity

Challenges Overcome:

- Initial resistance from players accustomed to county-based teams
- Logistical complexity of coordinating across three counties
- Security concerns about bringing together potentially rival communities
- Limited resources requiring creative solutions for equipment and venues

Evidence of Impact: Post-tournament surveys and informal feedback indicated that 87% of participants reported improved relationships with players from other

counties, while community leaders noted no tensions during the tournament period.

5. The Proposed Solution: Mixed-Team Model

Based on the evidence from these five case studies, particularly the success of the Tonj Super League model, I propose a transformative approach for the Bhar El Ghazal Counties Peace Tournament (BCPT). This model addresses the fundamental weaknesses identified in traditional tournament formats while building on proven success factors.

5.1 Core Concept: Unity Through Diversity

The central innovation involves creating 23 teams by deliberately mixing players from all counties within Bhar El Ghazal into balanced squads. Rather than representing individual counties, each team represents the broader Bhar El Ghazal region, fostering supra-county identity and reducing narrow loyalties that have undermined previous initiatives.

***Practical Insight:** During the Tonj Super League, it's observed that players initially struggled with the concept of mixed teams but quickly adapted when they realized it created more competitive balance and reduced accusations of bias. The key was thorough explanation of the rationale and transparent implementation of the mixing process. If this is for peace, why not include at least two players from other regions such as Naath Peace Tournaments?*

5.2 Theoretical Foundation

This approach builds on established peacebuilding principles while incorporating lessons learned from successful sports interventions globally:

- **Contact Theory Application:** Sustained interaction between diverse players under equal-status conditions
- **Common Identity Formation:** Shared team goals that transcend ethnic and regional boundaries
- **Stereotype Reduction:** Direct experience challenging preconceptions about other communities
- **Network Building:** Creation of cross-community relationships that persist beyond tournaments

5.3 Implementation Structure

Phase 1: Player Registration and Assessment

- Comprehensive registration system capturing players from all 23 counties
- Standardized skills assessment to ensure fair team distribution
- Background checks and eligibility verification
- Player orientation on tournament objectives and mixed-team concept

Phase 2: Team Formation

- Transparent draft process with public oversight
- Balanced distribution ensuring each team includes players from multiple counties
- Skills balancing to maintain competitive equity
- Team-building activities to foster cohesion among diverse players

Phase 3: Competition Structure

- League format with playoff rounds to maximize interaction
- Neutral venues rotating across the region
- Professional officiating with trained, impartial referees
- Comprehensive security and safety protocols

Phase 4: Community Engagement

- Peace education components integrated into match days
- Community dialogue sessions led by respected leaders
- Youth development programs linked to the tournament
- Media coverage emphasizing unity and cooperation themes

5.4 Governance Innovation

Learning from the governance failures observed in other tournaments, the BCPT model proposes a revolutionary Organizing Support Committee (OSC) structure:

- **Representation:** Equal representation from all 23 counties prevents domination by any single group
- **Transparency:** Open budgeting, procurement processes, and decision-making protocols
- **Accountability:** Regular reporting to communities and stakeholder oversight mechanisms
- **Professionalism:** Technical expertise in sports management, conflict resolution, and financial administration

***Governance Lesson:** In organizing the Tonj Super League, involving representatives from all participating counties in decision-making, even for minor issues, significantly reduced post-tournament complaints and built trust in the process.*

6. Implementation Framework

Successful implementation of the mixed-team model requires careful attention to sequencing and stakeholder engagement. Drawing from my experience with teams in Kenya and the Tonj Super League, this section outlines a practical roadmap for launching the BCPT.

6.1 Pre-Implementation Phase (Months 1-6)

Stakeholder Consultation and Buy-in

The success of any large-scale football initiative depends on genuine stakeholder support. This phase involves extensive consultation with:

- County commissioners and local government officials
- Traditional leaders and community elders
- Existing football clubs and player associations
- Youth organizations and civil society groups
- Religious leaders and peace advocates
- Women's groups and community organizations

Institutional Development

Establishing the Organizing Support Committee (OSC) with clear governance structures, including:

- Constitution and bylaws development
- Financial management and oversight protocols
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Communication and transparency policies

Resource Mobilization

Diversified funding strategy incorporating:

- Government partnerships at state and county levels
- Private sector sponsorship from local and international businesses
- Development partner support (NGOs, UN agencies, bilateral donors)
- Community contributions and volunteer support

6.2 Launch Phase (Months 7-12)

Player Registration and Team Formation

Registration Process:

- Establish registration centers in each of the 23 counties
- Develop standardized registration forms and eligibility criteria
- Conduct skills assessments using consistent evaluation methods
- Create comprehensive player database with skills ratings

Draft Process:

- Public draft ceremony with representative from each county
- Transparent selection algorithm ensuring balanced team composition
- Appeals process for disputed selections

- Team assignment ceremony to build excitement and ownership

Infrastructure and Logistics

- Venue selection and preparation across multiple counties
- Equipment procurement and distribution
- Transportation arrangements for teams and officials
- Communication systems and media partnerships

6.3 Competition Phase (Months 1-2)

Tournament Execution

The competition structure balances sporting excellence with peacebuilding objectives:

League Format:

- 23 teams divided into manageable groups for initial rounds
- Round-robin format within groups to maximize games
- Playoff structure culminating in championship rounds
- Approximately 2-month competition period

Match Day Operations:

- Professional referee assignments with performance monitoring
- Security protocols developed with local authorities
- Community engagement activities surrounding each match
- Media coverage emphasizing positive narratives

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regular assessment of peacebuilding outcomes
- Player and community feedback collection
- Incident reporting and resolution tracking

Implementation Reality Check: Based on my experience, the most critical success factor is maintaining momentum during the preparation phase. Most tournaments in South Sudan typically take 1-2 months from start to finish, so the timeline should be realistic and achievable within this timeframe.

7. Expected Outcomes and Impact Assessment

The mixed-team model for the BCPT is designed to generate both immediate sporting benefits and longer-term peacebuilding outcomes. This section outlines expected impacts across multiple dimensions, drawing from evidence of similar interventions and lessons learned from the successful Tonj Super League implementation.

7.1 Short-term Outcomes (0-12 months)

Improved Tournament Quality and Governance

- **Enhanced Competition Standards:** Mixed teams create more balanced competition, reducing predictable outcomes based on county resources
- **Reduced Bias and Corruption:** Transparent team formation and governance processes minimize opportunities for favoritism
- **Professional Administration:** Standardized procedures for officiating, scheduling, and dispute resolution

Immediate Social Benefits

- **Cross-community Interaction:** Players from different counties train and compete together regularly
- **Reduced Match-day Violence:** Mixed teams make it difficult for spectators to organize along ethnic lines
- **Youth Engagement:** Expanded opportunities for talented players regardless of county origin
- **Community Pride:** Shared ownership of regional tournament reduces zero-sum competition between counties

Evidence from Tonj Super League: Within three months of tournament launch, we documented less than 1% tension in player disputes compared to previous county-

based tournaments, primarily attributed to mixed-team dynamics that prevented conflicts from escalating along ethnic lines.

7.2 Medium-term Outcomes (1-3 years)

Enhanced Inter-county Trust and Cooperation

- **Relationship Building:** Sustained interaction through multiple tournament cycles creates lasting personal connections
- **Stereotype Reduction:** Direct experience challenges negative perceptions between communities
- **Collaborative Problem-solving:** Joint team challenges require players to work across traditional boundaries
- **Leadership Development:** Players develop skills in managing diversity and building inclusive teams

Institutional Strengthening

- **Sustainable Governance Structures:** OSC model provides template for other regional initiatives
- **Conflict Resolution Capacity:** Developed mechanisms for addressing disputes peacefully
- **Technical Expertise:** Training programs build local capacity in sports administration

7.3 Long-term Outcomes (3-10 years)

Transformed Regional Identity

- **Bhar El Ghazal Unity:** Shared sporting identity that transcends county and ethnic boundaries
- **National Integration:** Model for similar initiatives in other regions of South Sudan
- **Generational Change:** Young people with different attitudes toward inter-community relationships
- **Cultural Shift:** Sport as accepted mechanism for addressing community tensions

Broader Peace Dividends

- **Reduced Conflict Incidents:** Measurable decrease in inter-community violence
- **Political Stability:** Reduced ethnic mobilization in political competitions
- **Social Capital:** Networks of trust that facilitate cooperation in other sectors

7.4 Measurement and Evaluation Framework

Rigorous impact assessment requires systematic data collection across multiple indicators:

Quantitative Indicators

- Number of cross-county friendships formed (player surveys)
- Reduction in match-day security incidents
- Increased inter-county trade and economic cooperation
- Tournament completion rates and participation levels
- Media coverage sentiment analysis

Qualitative Indicators

- Player testimonials and life-story interviews
- Community leader assessments of inter-group relations
- Focus group discussions with spectators and families
- Ethnographic observation of team dynamics and interactions

Evaluation Experience: In evaluating the BCPT, Twic Mayardit Peace Tournament & Tonj Super League, the most compelling evidence came from unplanned interactions – players choosing to visit friends in other counties, and spontaneous cooperation during community crises. Example, the BCPT 2025 quarter final between Twic and Abyei at Juba National Stadium. These organic developments were often more significant than formal survey responses.

8. Risk Analysis and Mitigation Strategies

Implementing the mixed-team model involves significant risks that must be carefully managed to ensure success. Drawing from failures observed in other tournaments and challenges encountered during the Tonj Super League, this section identifies potential problems and proposes specific mitigation strategies.

Risk 1: Resistance to Mixed-Team Concept

Description: Players, officials, and communities accustomed to county-based representation may resist the mixed-team approach, viewing it as diluting local identity or reducing competitive advantages.

Likelihood: High (based on initial reactions observed in Tonj Super League)

Mitigation Strategies:

- Extensive community consultation and education campaigns explaining benefits
- Pilot programs demonstrating success of mixed-team approach
- Involvement of respected local leaders as advocates for the model
- Gradual implementation allowing communities to adapt to the concept
- Clear communication about how regional identity complements rather than replaces local identity

Risk 2: Security Incidents and Violence

Description: Large gatherings and competitive emotions could lead to violence, particularly if external political tensions influence sporting events.

Likelihood: Medium to High (based on history of previous tournaments)

Mitigation Strategies:

- Comprehensive security planning with local law enforcement
- Venue selection prioritizing safety and crowd control capabilities
- Professional crowd management training for security personnel
- Early warning systems to identify potential flashpoints
- Rapid response protocols for incident management
- Insurance coverage for participants and spectators

Risk 3: Governance Conflicts and Organizational Breakdown

Description: Disagreements within the OSC or between stakeholder groups could paralyze decision-making and undermine tournament operations.

Likelihood: Medium (based on complexity of multi-stakeholder governance)

Mitigation Strategies:

- Clear constitutional framework with defined roles and responsibilities
- Conflict resolution mechanisms built into governance structure
- Professional facilitation for key decision-making processes
- Regular review and adaptation of governance procedures
- External mediation resources available for major disputes

Risk 4: External Political Interference

Description: Political figures may attempt to manipulate the tournament for electoral advantage or to advance narrow partisan interests.

Likelihood: Medium to High (based on politicization of other sporting events)

Mitigation Strategies:

- Clear policies prohibiting partisan political activities at tournament events
- Balanced representation ensuring no single political faction controls the OSC
- Professional sports administration insulated from political pressures
- Media guidelines emphasizing sporting rather than political narratives
- International observer presence to monitor political neutrality

Risk 5: Inadequate Infrastructure and Logistics

Description: Poor facilities, transportation challenges, and logistical failures could undermine tournament quality and participant safety.

Likelihood: High (based on infrastructure challenges across South Sudan)

Mitigation Strategies:

- Comprehensive infrastructure assessment and improvement planning
- Partnership with development organizations for facility upgrades
- Flexible venue arrangements with backup options
- Professional logistics management with experienced personnel

***Risk Management Lessons:** The most effective risk mitigation strategy employed in the Tonj Super League was openness. The stakeholders meetings during the lead-up period and briefings during the tournament. This approach allowed us transparency to shine through.*

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

This comprehensive analysis of football-for-peace initiatives in South Sudan demonstrates both the tremendous potential and significant challenges of using sport as a peacebuilding tool. The evidence from five regional tournaments reveals that traditional county-based formats often reinforce rather than transcend existing divisions, while innovative approaches that deliberately integrate players across communities show remarkable promise for fostering genuine unity.

The mixed-team model proposed for the Bhar El Ghazal Counties Peace Tournament represents a fundamental paradigm shift that addresses the root causes of previous tournament failures while building on documented success factors. My direct experience and observation in implementing this approach provides concrete evidence that cross-community football initiatives can succeed when properly structured and managed.

9.1 Key Findings

The comparative analysis reveals several critical insights:

1. **Structure Determines Outcomes:** The way teams are formed and tournaments are organized has more impact on peacebuilding potential than cultural affinity or good intentions
2. **Governance is Paramount:** Transparent, inclusive, and professional governance structures are essential for tournament credibility and sustainability
3. **Scale Matters:** Successful initiatives match organizational capacity to tournament scope, avoiding over-ambitious designs that exceed available resources

4. **Community Ownership is Essential:** Top-down initiatives fail without genuine community buy-in and stakeholder involvement in design and implementation
5. **Integration Requires Intention:** Cross-community cooperation does not happen automatically – it must be deliberately designed into tournament structures and activities

9.2 Strategic Recommendations

For the Bhar El Ghazal Counties Peace Tournament

1. **Adopt the Mixed-Team Model:** Implement the 23-team structure with players drawn from all counties to maximize cross-community interaction and minimize bias
2. **Invest in Governance:** Establish the OSC with strong constitutional framework, transparent procedures, and accountability mechanisms before launching competition activities
3. **Prioritize Stakeholder Engagement:** Conduct extensive consultation with all 23 counties to build genuine support and address concerns before implementation
4. **Develop Comprehensive Risk Management:** Implement robust security, financial oversight, and conflict resolution systems to prevent common sources of tournament failure
5. **Plan for Sustainability:** Establish diversified funding base and institutional structures that can survive changes in political leadership or external support

For Other Regions in South Sudan

1. **Replicate Successful Models:** Adapt the mixed-team approach to local contexts in other regions, learning from BCPT implementation experience
2. **Build National Framework:** Develop standardized governance and operational procedures that can be applied across different regional initiatives
3. **Create Learning Networks:** Establish mechanisms for sharing lessons learned and best practices among different regional tournaments
4. **Integrate with National Development:** Align regional football initiatives with broader national reconciliation and development objectives

For Development Partners and Donors

1. **Support Innovation:** Provide funding and technical assistance for innovative approaches like the mixed-team model rather than traditional tournament formats
2. **Invest in Capacity Building:** Support training programs for local sports administrators, referees, and peace practitioners
3. **Promote Evaluation:** Require rigorous monitoring and evaluation to document impact and inform program improvements
4. **Encourage Regional Approaches:** Support initiatives that transcend narrow ethnic or geographic boundaries

9.3 Implementation Timeline

Based on lessons learned from the Tonj Super League and analysis of other regional initiatives, I recommend the following timeline for BCPT implementation:

- **Phase 1:** Stakeholder consultation and OSC establishment
- **Phase 2:** Player registration, team formation, and infrastructure preparation
- **Phase 3:** Tournament execution (1-2 months) with continuous monitoring and evaluation
- **Phase 4:** Impact assessment, lesson learning, and planning for subsequent cycles

9.4 Final Reflection

As a football coach and practitioner who has witnessed both the divisive potential of poorly managed tournaments and the transformative power of well-designed initiatives, I am convinced that sport can play a crucial role in South Sudan's journey toward sustainable peace. However, this potential can only be realized through careful attention to program design, professional implementation, and continuous learning from both successes and failures.

The mixed-team model proposed in this study offers a practical pathway forward that addresses the systemic problems that have undermined previous efforts while building on documented success factors. With proper implementation, the Bhar El Ghazal Counties Peace Tournament could become a model for the entire nation, demonstrating that football can indeed serve as a powerful instrument of unity and reconciliation.

Personal Commitment: *Through Red Flames FC and my continued work in football development, I remain committed to supporting the implementation of these*

About the Author

Malok Mading is a football coach and sports development practitioner with extensive experience in South Sudan's regional football landscape. As Technical Coach for Tonj South County, he has worked directly with players and communities across multiple counties, gaining firsthand insights into both the challenges and opportunities of using sport for peacebuilding.

As Founder of Red Flames FC (<https://redflamesfc.com>), Mading has been instrumental in developing grassroots football programs that emphasize cross-community participation and youth development. His work focuses on creating inclusive sporting environments that transcend traditional ethnic and regional boundaries.

The author welcomes feedback and discussion on the ideas presented in this study and can be contacted at **madingmalok@gmail.com** for opinions and further engagement on sport-for-peace initiatives in South Sudan.

For more information about ongoing football development activities, visit Red Flames FC at <https://redflamesfc.com>.