



Greater Horn of Africa Peace Building Project

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CASE STUDY FOUR:

Local Level Intergroup Peace Building in Southern Sudan: An Assessment of Effective Practices

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**The Effectiveness of Civil Society Initiatives
in Controlling Violent Conflicts and Building Peace**
A Study of Three Approaches in the Greater Horn of Africa

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Executive Summary

For the past decade, Southern Sudan has been at war with itself. The conflict in Southern Sudan has its origins in the wider conflict between the Government of Sudan (90s) and the main Southern Opposition group to Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The Southern conflict has manifested itself as an inter-ethnic conflict primarily between the Dinka and Nuer, the two major ethnic groups in the South and within SPLM/A. It is also true, however, that other smaller ethnic groups have been drawn into the conflict. Whatever side the smaller groups have taken has been a function of their relationship to the bigger groups.

Since the mid 1990s, the New Sudan Council of Churches, (NSCC) based in Nairobi, has taken the lead in fostering a dialogue among the various groups in Southern Sudan. This attempt has led to the establishment of a working relationship between SPLM/A and NSCC by defining the different responsibilities each side has to the people of Southern Sudan. SPLM/A's role is that of a political/military organization in opposition to the 90s. The NSCC's role is that of a civil society organization interested in creating peace among Southern feuding groups, and to lay the ground for the development of a viable civil society in Southern Sudan. The latter objective is seen as a precondition for creating conditions for good governance and democracy.

NSCC's objectives have coincided with United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) interest in promoting economic development, political stability and democratic governance in Southern Sudan. USAID along with other foreign donors have spent more than US \$1 billion in relief work in southern Sudan over the past decade. USAID interest is to move from "relief" to "development" work. Development, however, cannot take place without peace. Thus, USAID's support for NSCC's activities, primarily through the funding of community level/people-to-people conferences is one way in which conditions for development work can be created. This study assesses this USAID intervention and concludes that it represents one of the "effective practices" in achieving the stated objective.

Nature of Conflict and its Causes

There are two conflicts in the Sudan. The first conflict is the broader conflict between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and Southern Sudan whose principal organizing opposition movement is the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). The main fighting wing of SPLM is the Southern Sudan Liberation Army (SPLA) under the leadership of John Garang. The second conflict is an intra-South conflict. The Southern Sudanese are divided among several ethnic groups, the principal ones being the Dinka and the Nuer, who are themselves sub-divided into even smaller groups. This project is primarily concerned with the conflict among Southern Sudanese groups. However, it is necessary to understand the broader conflict between the GOS and the South in general, in order to contextualize the conflict in Southern Sudan.

The conflict between the GOS (generically known as the North) and Southern Sudan (generically known as the South) has a long history that goes back to the colonial period (For a broad perspective of the conflict see: Deng, 1995). In 1820-21, joint Turkish and Egyptian forces invaded and took over the northern regions of the Sudan. The Turkish and Egyptian slave traders used the North as a base for their forays into the South. Reaction to the Turkish/Egyptian control came from both North and South, and had a unifying effect on the country as both sections pulled together to resist foreign domination. The popular unrest culminated in a successful revolt, which began in 1881, and brought Muhammaad Ahmed al-Mahdi to power in 1885.

“The Mahdi,” as this leader was popularly known, was seen as the messiah. He used Islam as a tool to raise support in the North. The South, though it did not convert, saw the religion of the Mahdists as a tool for liberation, a way to organize opposition to the foreign rulers. When the Mahdist government gained power, however, slave raids into southern territory continued. Islam was turned against the South, thus becoming a divisive element.

Colonial intervention, known as the Reconquest, led to the British-dominated Anglo-Egyptian condominium (1899-1955), that ended slavery and nominally unified the country. The decision to administer the North and the South separately, however, reinforced Arabism and Islam in the North, encouraged southern development along indigenous African lines, and introduced Christian missionary education and rudiments of Western civilization as elements of modernization in the South. Interaction between the two sets of people was strongly discouraged.

While the colonial administration invested considerably in the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the North, the South remained isolated, secluded, and undeveloped. The principal objective of colonial rule in the region was the establishment and maintenance of law and order. The separate administration of the North and the South left open the option that the South might eventually be annexed to one of the East African colonies.

Suddenly, only nine years before independence, the British reversed the policy of separate development, but they had neither the time nor the political will to put in place constitutional arrangements that would ensure protection for the South in a united Sudan. Since independence, ruthless attempts to dominate, Islamize and Arabize the South have characterized the policies of successive governments. Southern resistance to Arab-Muslim domination and assimilation has also persisted commensurately. The result has been an internecine war of visions (Deng, 1995:).

The war of visions between the North and South first broke out in August 1955, just four months before independence was declared on January 1, 1956. Armed conflict has been largely between successive governments in Khartoum and liberation movements based in the southern part of the country. The preoccupying concern among the northerners at independence was to correct the divisive effect of the separatist policies of the colonial administration. The logical response was for the government to seek the unity of the country by pursuing the forced assimilation of the South through Arabization and Islamization, which for the South was tantamount to replacing British colonialism with Arab hegemony. South resistance intensified first in the political call for a federal arrangement and later in an armed struggle for secession (Johnson, 1999).

The political impasse created by the situation in the South prompted the military to take over in 1958, only two years after independence with the aim of pursuing the strategies of Arabization and Islamization more vigorously, unhampered by parliamentary democracy. The ruthlessness with which these assimilation policies were pursued in the South aggravated the conflict, which became a full-fledged civil war in the 1960's. The effect of that war on the political situation led to the popular uprising that overthrew the military regime in 1964. The oppressive policies toward the South were temporarily relaxed. With the return of democracy less than a year later, the traditional political parties assumed control and resumed the assimilation policies with a vengeance. The level of repression was higher than ever before. As the violence escalated, the differences between the North and the South became sharper, and the level of political instability rose. This vicious cycle was broken in 1969, when another military junta, this time under the leadership of Jaafar Muhammad Nimeiri, seized power.

After displaying an ambivalent attitude toward the rebels, Nimeiri's government eventually negotiated with the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) and in 1972 concluded the Addis Ababa Agreement, which granted the South regional autonomy. The regime, however, remained under pressure from the conservative and radical fundamentalist elements and, in particular the sectarian parties and the Muslim Brotherhood, with whom Nimeiri eventually entered into an uneasy alliance. Nimeiri also underwent a personal conversion, becoming a born-again Muslim, even though he still hoped that through religious reforms he could pull the rug from under the feet of the sectarian opposition leaders and the fundamentalists with whom he had a restless partnership. He also hoped to remove the anomaly of liberal democracy in the South, which was incongruous with the national system of an authoritarian presidency. For these and other political reasons, Nimeiri gradually eroded the South's autonomy, moving relentlessly toward imposing Islamic law, of *shari'a*, and establishing an Islamic

state. Eventually he unilaterally abrogated the Addis Ababa Agreement, triggering the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its military wing, the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA), whose declared objective was the creation of a new secular, democratic, and pluralistic Sudan. Within only two years of the resumption of hostilities, a popular uprising known as *initiate* led to Numeiri's own political demise in April 1985 (Johnson, 1999).

Neither the transitional government that followed Numeiri's overthrow nor the subsequent elected government was able to reach a settlement with SPLM-SPLA. The war in the South moved northward, into the non-Arab areas of the Nuba in southern Kordofan, the Ingassana in southern Blue Nile, and to a lesser degree, the Fur in the western region of Darfur. Although the imposition of *shari'a* took the limelight, because of the association of Islam with Arabism, this war became increasingly racial, remaining the greatest threat to the stability and the development of the country. Famines caused by natural disasters and by the use of food as a weapon in the conflict added a heavy toll to the war tragedy. During both regimes the ruling political parties and the SPLM-SPLA exerted intensive efforts toward peace and humanitarian relief. Important meetings and talks took place between representative groups and leaders on both sides.

When it seemed that the national will was united behind the peace process, the situation suddenly changed even more radically in favor of the religious right, which saw in the compromise a threat to the Islamic trend. On June 30, 1989, a radical Islamic faction in the military took over, this time under the leadership of General Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, whose Islamist policies have widened the cleavage with the SPLM-SPLA and sharpened the issues and options confronting the nation. As a result, religion has become a highly divisive factor in a manner that has reactivated calls for separation between the North and South even within the SPLM-SPLA, which, as a movement, had been committed to unity."

While the international community has concentrated on the resumption of talks between the North and the South primarily through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) process—a forum of regional governments: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, and Uganda, with financial support from outside powers including the United States—the past decade has also witnessed a steady rise in intra-South conflict.

The Nuer and the Dinka, the two largest ethnic groups in the South, historically have primarily inhabited Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal. Both groups traditionally moved through each other's areas to water cattle during migrations to and from swamp areas. Although one group occasionally raided the other group's livestock, the Nuer and the Dinka avoided full-scale conflict in the border area until the civil war resumed in 1983. As many studies have shown, historically, there have been numerous ways in which Dinka and Nuer have utilized each other's resources to survive. As John Prendergast noted in a recent study, these two groups "have raided each others livestock; traded cattle, grain, and ivory; and intermarried and expanded kinship networks (1996:12)."

The intra-South conflict, which is the focus of this study and by extension the basis for the intervention under review, has its origins in the 1991 SPLM-SPLMA internal split. Nuer incursions into Dinka territory in the Jonglei region in late 1991 sparked a fierce conflict between the two groups. Soon after Riek Machar, a Nuer, and two other commanders announced a coup against SPLM-SPLA chairman John Garang, a Dinka, Garang dispatched a small contingent of soldiers commanded by William Nyoun Bany to Ayod in Eastern Upper Nile. Nyoun's soldiers were quickly forced to retreat toward Kongor by troops loyal to the splinter faction (SPLM/A-Nasir) and Nuer militia counter-attacked in two waves. The first counter-attack, in September 1991, went only as far as Kongor; the second offensive, in November 1991, advanced deep into Dinka territory, south of Bor.

Thus ensued in the 1990's a bitter conflict between the Dinka and Nuer with devastating consequences for the stability of the South in general and to the social integrity of both Dinka and Nuer communities. John Prendergast (1996:13-14) has provided an excellent analysis of how this intra-South conflict affected the internal relations among Southerners, but also, underlying the whole conflict, how the GOS used the Dinka-Nuer split to fuel further conflict in the South. According to Prendergast, the troops of the SPLM/A-Nasir (Nuer) faction were joined by soldiers from Anyanya II. A Nuer militia that fought the SPLM/A from 1983 to 1987 and then splintered, some of its soldiers joining the SPLM/A and others becoming a government-supported paramilitary force operating out of Malakal, the GOS-held capital of the Upper Nile. Thousands of Nuer civilians from northern Upper Nile, known as the "White Army" (civilian militias) or "Decbor," also entered the fray. Nasir faction commanders were either unable or unwilling to control the Anyanya II White Army personnel, who formed the vast majority of the attacking force. Their primary objectives were looting and revenge for earlier SPLM/A attacks on Nuer communities and Anyanya II operational areas. Civilians in these areas had also been heavily taxed by the SPLM/A and were the victims of constant SPLM/A atrocities, including kidnapping young women to be married to soldiers and forced conscription.

The results were catastrophic. An estimated 30,000 Nuer rampaged through Dinka areas, burning houses and killing the inhabitants, leveling hospitals and clinics, destroying crops and stores, killing cattle, and creating chaos throughout Bor district. In December 1991, the UN reported that more than 200,000 residents of the Bor and Kongor districts, in an exodus unlike anything seen before in Sudan, fled south in search of food, shelter, and security. Although the final estimates vary widely, as many as 5,000 people were killed. Dinka civilians were shot or "speared or garroted - and in a particularly creative act of cruelty, thousands of cattle were blinded with pangas (machetes).

The destruction or large-scale raiding of cattle devastated the subsistence base and livelihoods of thousands of families in the Bor and Kongor districts. In surveys conducted before the attacks, Norwegian People's Aid estimated that nearly 400,000 head of cattle populated the area. By January 1992, this number had plummeted to 50,000, the balance having been stolen or killed. This destruction of the Dinka

population's asset base in Upper Nile parallels a similar campaign of asset-stripping perpetrated by the government -financed Arab Baggara militia in 1987-1988 in northern Bahr al-Ghazal, another Dinka population center. One relief official observed that the Dinka "used to wear bright-colored clothes or jellabias; they are now naked or in rags" (Prendergast, 1996:14).

Societal Disillusion

The case of the Dinka people provides a window into the process of societal dissolution in southern Sudan. The family support network and social norms and rules, which have protected the Dinka through the past crises, are beginning to break down under the strain of the war. Their economy, based on cattle, agriculture, trade, and fishing, has been compromised by frequent raids by the GOS and Nuer. The death and disappearance of large numbers of Dinka men has resulted in increased insecurity for women and a loosening of social networks in a society that places a great importance on family name and lineage.

Traditional systems of "ghost marriages" (temporary remarriages, often within the family, to ensure the continuation of a family line if a women's husband is absent for too long), which Dinkas believe ensure their survival, have weakened as fathers fail to provide for the mothers and their children. The influx of relief agencies into Dinka society has led Dinkas to inflate population figures or pretend to be needy, a condition normally stigmatized in Dinka society. As a result, Dinkas have become increasingly dependent on outside aid, and their traditional survival networks have begun to erode in some places. Women are especially at risk as they are forced to the bottom of the economy and resort to desperate measures to care for themselves and their children in the absence of family support.

In the meanwhile, the Nuer incursion into Dinka territory was matched by the intensity of the conflict within Nuer society itself. The biggest conflict was between factions that had allied with (or been supplied with weapons by) GOS. Arguably, the intra-Nuer conflict was as devastating to Nuer society, as was the Nuer-Dinka conflict to Dinka society. Thus the intra-South conflict had the effect of undermining the South's broader struggle against the North, and threatened to push the South's aspirations for either increased autonomy with Sudan, or independence, further away from the agenda. This reality also made the efforts of the international community to alleviate the South's suffering much more difficult. In spite of all these obstacles, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) has poured over \$1 billion US dollars in the South. OLS has been primarily led by the United Nations and supported by other international agencies.

US Intervention to Assist the South

The United States government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has over the past decade, evolved a strategy of intervention in Southern Sudan to alleviate the suffering of the people in the region as a result of the conflict. USAID strategy has evolved in response to the shift in the power balance between SPLM/A and its opposition, primarily in SPLM/A's favor. As Salinas and D'Silva (1999) have noted, the USAID approach that evolved, reflected the increased level of stability and security that had emerged by the mid 1990's as a result of military advances made by the SPLA in much of the southernmost part of Sudan. This area, comprising all parts of Equatoria Province lying west of the Nile, is also known as the "West Bank."

Salinas and D'Silva further note that the economic potential of the West Bank was largely neglected by both donors and relief agencies until 1994 when USAID began to fund innovative activities in the region. While other donors were reluctant to provide assistance that did not meet the strict definition of "emergency" or "relief" assistance, and facilitating economic recovery in stable areas so that the effects of future disasters could be mitigated. As areas in the West Bank stabilized, and significant trade routes opened up, USAID seized the opportunity to invest in economic transition. Salina and D'Silva conclude that:

Overall, the West Bank experience provides evidence of USAID's success in promoting economic and political transition through targeted interventions. The West Bank, though still affected by conflict, has been stable and secure enough to make such interventions possible - and effective. The primary lesson learned from this experience, therefore, is that complex emergencies and conflicts cannot be thought of in absolute terms. There are often pockets of stability, and resulting potential for transition, even in a situation of ongoing conflict. And these areas can benefit from rehabilitation-oriented programs. By devoting as little as four percent of its total assistance to Sudan over the past six years, USAID has learned that, if programmed properly, a small amount of assistance can go a long way toward restoring people's coping mechanisms and providing them with the ability to reengage in economic activities. These interventions serve to jump start the market economy, promote the development of civil society, and further the creation of a functional, transparent, and accountable civil administration (1999: viii)

This is the primary lesson that informs the intervention, which is the focus of this study: promotion of community level dialogue to promote peace building in Southern Sudan. Based on the positive experiences from activities in the West Bank, the USAID funded Sudan Transition and Rehabilitation Project (STAR) was launched at the beginning of 1999. At the center of this project was a critical assumption that if there was an increase in participatory democracy and good governance practices in opposition-held areas of Sudan, conditions for long-term peace would result. Consequently, the discourse on Sudan would move from relief and rehabilitation to serious discussions about the future of the South in the overall framework of Sudan. A further assumption

was that participatory democracy would only be created by bringing together the warring factions in Southern Sudan, primarily the Nuer and Dinka in face-to-face discussions as to the nature of the conflict and the future of their communities.

STAR's assumptions were in line with what the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) had been envisaging in creating conditions for dialogue in the south, primarily by the NSCC engaging the SPLM/A in discussions about peace in the South. Thus, with the broad objective of creating peace in Southern Sudan, the SPLM/A and NSCC held a Dialogue conference in the Yei County July 21-24, 1997 resulting in the following statement cosigned by John Garang of SPLM/A and Bishop Joseph Marona, Chairman of NSCC:

"We the leaders and officials of SPLM/A and NSCC, join together in our affirmation of freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights and the dignity and respect of all persons regardless of race, sex or religion. In order to form representative government, establish justice, achieve peace and reconciliation, promote dignity and equality, advance the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty and democracy for the peoples of the liberated areas of Sudan, hereafter referred to as New Sudan, the SPLM and NSCC, through their official leadership and representatives present at this Dialogue conference, who are signatories here below, do:

- Reaffirm our commitment to shared visions of freedom, equality, justice and dignity as the legitimate political, social, and economic aspirations of the peoples of New Sudan.
- Affirm our belief that human rights, civil liberties and eradication of all forms of oppression, as exemplified by policies and practices of the National Islam Front (NIF) and other sectarian parties, are essential to achieve a better standard of life for the peoples of New Sudan;
- Declare our intention to strive for realization of these visions and beliefs through mobilization of the people, reconciliation and unification of persons and groups, and development of civil authorities and civil society based upon democratic principles and processes, establishment of human rights, norms of justice, enactment of fair laws and administration of civil and legal systems;
- Undertake to collaborate with each other and to respect each other's roles and respective authorities for carrying out their complementary functions and activities, whereby SPLM seeks to achieve liberation and the establishment of good governance for the people of the Sudan, and NSCC seeks to achieve its spiritual mandate and as part of civil society assist in peacemaking and reconciliation among the different peoples of New Sudan;

To these ends we, the officials and members of SPLM and NSCC, are agreed to the following resolutions and recommendations and do assume responsibility for their

enactment and realization through the policies and practices enacted within and through their respective organizations. (NSCC, 1997:1-2)”

The significance of this statement was that the SPLA/M would recognize the unique role played by the NSCC as a “neutral” body with special responsibilities to serve the people of the South. It also substantively made the NSCC the natural facilitator for fostering community level dialogue among fighting factions in the South. The principal mechanism for this dialogue, supported by USAID has been the Inter and intra-ethnic Conferences. To date, there have been two major conferences: the Nuer-Dinka Peace and Reconciliation Conference, Wunlit, Tonj Country, Bahr el Ghazal (February 27-March 7, 1999) and the East Bank People to People Peace and Reconciliation Conference, Liliir, Bor County, Upper Nile (May 9-15, 2000). The Liliir Conference produced the Liliir Covenant between the Anyuak, Dinka, Jie, Kachip, Murle, and Nuer (see appendix for text of the covenant). A minor conference among Nuer groups in November 1999 on the East Bank was less successful. For USAID purposes it is significant that USAID support for these conferences was sought by NSCC to facilitate the dialogue and these were positive outcomes from the Conference.

Key Assumptions of the Intervention

There are several key assumptions, implicit and explicit, which have informed USAID intervention, and by extension NSCC activities. The first assumption is that political stability is an essential aspect of peace building in Southern Sudan. Whether it is in the realm of economic development or democratic governance, political stability provides the basis upon which both objectives can be pursued. The second assumption is that in spite of the ongoing conflict among Southern Sudanese, there is a dire need for reconciliation, not only among the warring factions, but also within the ranks of SPLM/A and NSCC. For SPLM/A, reconciliation in the South paves a way for united action against GOS; for NSCC, reconciliation gives it an opportunity to enhance its programs in peace building and the creation of a viable civil society. The existence of a vibrant civil society is generally acknowledged as a fundamental precondition for both good governance and democratic practice. The third assumption is that the situation in Southern Sudan is highly fluid, and thus defies easy characterization. Recognition must be made of the fact that the current conflict has a history that goes back to the British colonial period (and even further back); and thus it is a culmination of a pile of tragedies. Thus success will not come overnight.

With the above assumptions in mind, it is thus appropriate to reiterate the purpose of the intervention: to foster dialogue among communities that have been in conflict in Southern Sudan, largely as a result of the larger Sudanese conflict. The rationale for choosing dialogue as an intervention vehicle is based on the history of the people themselves who are now in conflict. Prior to external influence—primarily manipulation by GOS and the supply of more deadly weapons—there existed a mechanism for conflict resolution among Southern Sudanese. The mechanism was the age-old tradition of discussions between chiefs and elders in addressing all-important issues in society. This is the primary message that came from both written sources and interviews by people involved in the peace building effort (see appendix for list of interviews). The idea here then is that some of the age-old traditions of conflict resolution can be restored to help bring about a functioning peace. The assumption here is not that restoration is for the recreating of the status quo ante, since that is an impossible task. But rather, the idea is to employ and apply mechanisms of conflict resolution that have been useful in the past and creatively apply them to a new and dynamic context. The central element in this strategy is to foster dialogue among people who have been fighting. Dialogue as a mechanism in conflict resolution has a long history among Southern Sudanese peoples. The choice of dialogue as an instrument for peace by the NSCC is therefore not accidental.

Implementation of Intervention

The recent history of community level intervention in Southern Sudan goes back to the dialogue between SPLM/A and NSCC. For USAID however, the intervention began with support for the Wunlit Nuer-Dinka Peace and Reconciliation Conference of February-March 1999. The primary purpose of the Wunlit conference was to reconcile the Dinka and Nuer on the west bank of the Nile. The conference, organized by NSCC, invited participants from those areas where Nuer and Dinka border each other, which are six administrative units (counties) on each side. Thirty participants were invited from each county, for a total of 180 Nuer and 180 Dinka. Each county selected representatives according to a common formula: 15 chiefs, and 15 from other social elements (elders, women, youth, and intellectuals). In addition to the 360 participants, observers were invited: from SPLM areas (since SPLM is hosting the Bahr el Ghazal conference), the county commissioner and executive director from each county (both SPLM officials) to support the 30 participants from that county; and 6 Nuer chiefs and 2 Murle chiefs from east of the Nile. A group of about 6 rapporteurs facilitated the daily sessions; these were well-known intellectuals from Nuer and Dinka, not associated with any political faction.

A second intervention was the Upper Nile Reconciliation Conference among Nuer groups, which took place November 1-7, 1999. The purpose of the conference was to bring together the Lou Nuer of Upper Nile to talk about peace in the area. Again, the NSCC had played a pivotal role in convening the conference. The Lou area, including the towns of Waat, Akobo, Yuai, and Langkein, had been wracked by conflict as military forces under three commands had battled each other. Frequently, the “White Army” youth militia groups, numbering in the thousands, joined various groups and entered the conflict. As a result, almost all UN and NGO humanitarian groups had withdrawn from the area, and near anarchy had reigned. All forms of civil governance had collapsed, thus making the life of the general population extremely miserable. The final communiqué from the conference is known as the Waat Lou Nuer Covenant, it is reproduced later in this document.

At the time of investigation, a third conference was underway. This was the Liliir Conference, which was officially known as the East (Nile) Bank People-to-People Peace and Reconciliation Conference, May 9-15, 2000. The investigative team could not attend this meeting but received reports from attendees and the final document from the conference. The final document is known as the Liliir Covenant between the Anyuak, Tinka, Jie, Kachipo, Murle, and Nuer. (The covenant is reproduced later in this document).

Impact of the Intervention

Across the board, it is clear that community level dialogue or people-to-people contact is having a positive impact in community relations. This is the view held by the principal facilitators of these conferences: NSCC; and most of the interviewees who were either participants at the conference (for example: Canon Clemend Junda, Secretary General of the All Africa Conference of Churches) or keen observers of the Southern Sudanese scene for the past decade (for example: Harold Miller of the Mennonite Central Committee and member of the Nairobi based Sudan working group).

The key evidence that the intervention is making an impact is two fold. First, in the West Bank where Dinka and Nuer border each other, there are no longer the clashes that had previously resulted in the rustling and killing of livestock and the abduction of women and children. These activities had been the sore points in the evolving relationship between the two peoples since the internal crisis of SPLM/A. Second, there is recognition by SPLM/A that the reconciliation is happening in spite of it, even though one of the influencing factors in the ability to hold ongoing dialogue between the Nuer and Dinka is general peace, which happens to be provided by SPLM/A. So the factors that are contributing to the success of the intervention actually lie in the origin of the conflict itself.

The reconciliation between Nuer and Dinka had immediate results at the conference in Wunlit, of the return by either side of some abducted children. As related by at least three participants at the Wunlit Conference, after several days of deliberation, a Nuer chief stood up and “confessed” to have in his custody a Dinka boy of about 13-14 years, who had been abducted six or seven years earlier. The Nuer chief had raised the boy as his own and was wondering aloud what he needed to do to make things “right.” The boy was paraded in front of conference delegates. And for the abducted women who had subsequently become wives, each side agreed that women would be given the option of returning home, or staying with the current husbands who in turn would pay the necessary bride price, per custom.

One of the devastating impacts of the intra-South conflict has been the abandoning or the impossibility of carrying out normal economic activities—production and exchange—between neighboring peoples. Markets had closed down and goods for trading had disappeared. More than anything else, this lack of commercial interaction among Southern Sudanese fueled the insecurity and conflict because of the increased scarcity of resources. One immediate impact of political stability has been the resumption of economic exchange, particularly in the West Bank. If the general assumption that people who trade with each other does not fight are true, then post-Wunlit activities in the West Bank are a very positive sign indeed.

This is also the lesson that the Salinas and D’Silva (1999) study provides. It is obvious that when there is conflict, markets can hardly operate. However, the experience in the West Bank has shown that as long as farmers are assured access to markets, and

market demand continues to grow, they will continue to invest to produce surplus to sell. In other words, the issue in Southern Sudan, as it would be anywhere in the world, political stability, peace and a reasonable measure of economic certainty would unleash the energy of the people to engage in activities that are bound to improve their lives. The challenge for any intervention is to ensure that such conditions are created.

It is important to reiterate the fact that by all measures, intervention by the NSCC has had an appreciable impact in the lives of the people in Southern Sudan. In a substantive way the creation of conditions for peace seems to be accepted by many observers as a precursor to life returning to normal—at least within the context of the overarching larger conflict between the North and South. The fact that Dinka and Nuer cattle can graze in shared areas without immediately eliciting a violent response by either side is a positive development. This is an important step in creating conditions that can build up to other areas of cooperation. The fact that peoples' lives and their security are reasonably predictable makes the intervention a success. Most importantly however, is the recognition by the groups in question that their lives are better off in peaceful coexistence than in conflict.

Contextual and Situation Conditions

Given intensity of the conflict in Southern Sudan, it has not been uncommon for donor and other international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) to suspend their relief activity in the region, primarily for security reasons. This naturally has had the effect of making life more difficult for populations who had largely come to depend on outside assistance. The situation has further been complicated by a onetime the SPLM/A demand—which seems to have been withdrawn—that all international relief activities in the South be coordinated and approved by SPLM/A. The European Union (EU) among others refused to abide by this demand and has in the past year suspended its operations in the South.

The overarching context in the broad conflict between the North and the South is the IGAD process that has been in place for the past decade. Admittedly, the IGAD process leaves a lot to be desired: two of its members, Ethiopia and Eritrea, are at war with each other; one of its members, Uganda, is involved in the larger conflict in the Great Lakes Region; and Kenya, Chair of the IGAD process seems to lack the vigor of leadership that is necessary to jumpstart a process that has been dominant for a while. Perhaps a broader question—which is beyond the scope of this study—might be whether an active IGAD would have any appreciable impact on what is happening in Southern Sudan. It is possible that the IGAD process would force the GOS to reconsider its strategy of arming militias in the South, whose principal purpose is simply to create havoc in the lives of Southern Sudanese. The thinking in Khartoum seems to be that as long as the South is at war with itself, there is a little chance of success against the North.

In the last couple of years, there is evidence that both Libya and Egypt are showing more interest in what is happening in the Sudan. Egypt has long been an interested party in the outcome of the IGAD process because of the Nile and also because of GOS's support for political Islam. The latter aspect is seen by Egypt as a fundamental issue of political stability in the region, and in Egypt itself. On several occasions, Egypt has accused the current regime in Khartoum of sponsoring terrorism in Egypt. The attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak while attending the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Addis Ababa in 1995 was blamed on Khartoum sponsored terrorist elements. Libya's recent interest in being part of the solution in the overall Sudan conflict can be interpreted as an attempt by Colonel Ghaddafi to further rehabilitate his regime from the effects of international sanctions and isolation. Naturally, all parties concerned have received Libya's overtures with tremendous caution.

Conclusions

Based on the evidence, it is quite clear that community level dialogue when pursued under the right circumstances is a tremendous instrument for creating and maintaining peace. If we operate with the general assumption that people who talk to each other would rarely fight; or at the very least would not allow misunderstandings to deteriorate into physical confrontation, then ipso facto, maintaining a dialogue between communities should serve the same purpose. The most important factors in the success of an intervention are 1) willingness of parties to engage in dialogue; 2) adequate preparation by the facilitators, i.e. ensure that parties understand what is at stake and the ground rules are clear (everyone to be on the same page); 3) minimal outside influence, including that of SPLM/A; and 4) refocusing on the big picture: that the origins of the intra-South current conflict actually lies in the broader North-South conflict.

One of the issues that once in a while seems to be forgotten is that the big picture actually is the economic disparity between the North and South. GOS policy on economic development has consistently favored the North, as indeed was the case during the colonial period. In many ways, it is this disparity that has been at the core of the Sudanese conflict. To complicate matters, in the last two decades, the discovery of oil deposits in the South has made the GOS even more reluctant to entertain, even remotely, the possibility of the South seceding from Sudan and forming its own separate country. The irony is that while the South may have been willing with the autonomy envisaged under the Addis Ababa Accord of 1972, the discovery of oil in the South has essentially taken that option off the negotiating table. In projecting future development, the South can now envisage a more balanced economic development between the agricultural and mineral sectors as engines of a more dynamic political economy. The lesson for Khartoum is that if GOS had faithfully abided by the 1972 Accords, most likely the current conflict may have been avoided.

Looking at the three main conferences under examination here, Wunlit and Liliir were great successes because they met most of the conditions for success. Significantly, the chiefs and other interested parties noted at the very beginning of the deliberations that they were not willing to be used as pawns in the intra-SPLM/A struggle. They also noted that while those who remained in Southern Sudan suffered from malnutrition, lack of schools and health facilities, instigators of the conflict actually lived in Khartoum, Nairobi or some other capital and had access to all the facilities that were sorely lacking in their communities.

Waat on the other hand seems to have been less successful. According to knowledgeable informants, Waat suffered from lack of common purpose among participants, and more crucially, lack of leadership. Even though NSCC had played some role in convening Waat, the conference was quickly “hijacked” by the ambitions of some Nuer politicians and commanders who saw this as a chance to take over from the disgraced Rik Machar. Machar is now seen to have sold out to Khartoum and was thus

less credible as a leader of the Nuer. Further, by concentrating on overtly political issues (as opposed to local community dialogues), the conference lost an opportunity to address community concerns, which had been the primary purpose of its convening.

Recommendations

Without a doubt, the intervention under analysis here is something that should be pursued and expanded. The results are self-evident. In the West Bank, peace has largely been restored between the previously feuding Dinka and Nuer peoples. Stability and economic exchange are beginning to characterize the relationships between previously feuding groups. It is important that the intervention continues to be seen as responding to requests by parties close to the center of the crisis; in this case, the NSCC plays that role. USAID must avoid the temptation of taking the lead role in fostering to the dialogue. In a context where the smallest misunderstanding could trigger deadly conflict between groups, it is best to assist the process of reconciliation by working through credible local contacts.

Support for the peace process needs to be incremental. There is a danger of “overloading” the system if too much is done either in terms of funding or “too much” American/foreign presence. That is why working through NSCC is so critical. As long as NSCC is seen to be a neutral player, it remains the logical vehicle for USAID assistance. Working through NSCC also insulates USAID from a possible charge of being “political” or “biased” even though clearly, much of peace making is essentially political. In working through the NSCC, USAID should strive to enhance the capacity of NSCC to follow up on recommendations from the various conferences to ensure their implementation. Community level dialogue is an extremely delicate process and requires both logistical and political support. It would seem that at the present moment, NSCC might be lacking in this capacity. Arguably, the failure to follow up on the Waat initiative may have been one of the reasons for the lack of overall success compare to say Wunlit. Informants at NSCC readily accepted this view. Further, the recommendations for the latest conference in Liliir require extensive follow up of continued consultation among several ethnic groups. Thus, the importance of capacity building within the NSCC cannot be overemphasized.

Most importantly however, is the fact that in order for any initiative to succeed, all the stakeholders must be involved from the beginning. In the case of the Wunlit and Liliir Conferences, the NSCC consulted chiefs, elder, youth groups and the SPLM/A to ensure that all groups fully understood the process, and that no single group would be disadvantaged. The fact that NSCC allowed the process to continue for several days reflected its sensitivity to tradition, and the need to understand that reconciliation is a process similar to building a house. It is a process of putting together a house, brick by brick.

In a wider context, the lesson that may be learned from the interventions similar to the one by NSCC is that one-shot deals do not work very well. It is clear from the work of NSCC that negotiations and preparatory work were conducted over a long period of time before the conferences were held. The initial foray by the NSCC was the meeting with SPLA/M in 1997. The first major peace conference took place in February 1999, a full two years after the NSCC/SPLA initiative. The fact of preparation cannot be

overemphasized. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson that comes out of the Southern Sudan initiative. Further, the timetable for when the time is ripe for any peace making activity has to reflect what the participants are prepared to do, not what the facilitators want them to do. It has to be remembered that long after the facilitators are gone, the people on the ground will continue to relate to one another. Facilitators have to make themselves available; they cannot dictate the terms and conditions of the facilitation. This is not to suggest however that facilitators cannot help shape the direction of the negotiation by pointing out the various possibilities of solving problems.

Covenants

LILIIR COVENANT
between the
ANYUAK, DINKA, JIE, KACHIPO, MURLE AND NUER
who attended the

**EAST BANK PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PEACE AND
RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE**
in
LILIIR, BOR COUNTY, UPPER NILE, SUDAN
(May 9th to the 15th, 2000)

A gathering of traditional and civil leaders was convened in Liliir (Bor, county), to reconcile the differences and conflicts between the Anyuak, Dinka (Bor & Padang), and peace amongst themselves. The spirit of the conference was reflected at the opening by the ceremonial sacrifice of a 'White Bull,' and concluded with the declaration of a joint covenant between the represented ethnic groups. The covenant was sealed with the sacrifice of a 'White Ox,' the offering of Christian worship, and the signatures of each of the participating delegates and observers publicly recorded. The following outlines their covenant:

Under the facilitation of the NSCC, and witnessed by many church leaders and other citizens of Sudan, we, the delegates of the Liliir conference have established a covenant of peace and reconciliation between us. We declare our intention today to cease from hostile acts, and commit ourselves to the practical measures necessary to ensure the integrity and sustainability of our agreement. Recalling the spirit and wisdom handed down from our ancestors, and the memory of our daughters and sons who have unnecessarily died over the past 10 years, we pledged ourselves to observe and implement this covenant and its accompanying resolutions.

We have unanimously agreed that:

*** all traditional hostilities will cease among us, and that all military (and militia) groups are to respect the civilian population and abide by, and protect, this covenant;

*** the conditions necessary to foster local peace and development are brought about by our communities and leaders, and the provision of basic essential services for the people are made available and improved;

*** an amnesty will be upheld for all offences against our people and their property prior to the conference, in the spirit of reconciliation and unity. The amnesty takes effect from this date;

*** all abducted women and children are freely returned to their places of origin, and where necessary, marriage customs are fulfilled;

*** freedom of movement across our common borders is upheld, and trade and communication is encouraged and supported;

*** all across border agreements are respected and the authority of the border chiefs and police patrols are justly observed;

*** access to common areas for grazing, fishing, and water points will be regulated and shared peacefully among us;

*** we will demand good governance from our leaders for the achievement of unity and the observance of human rights;

***we will advocate on behalf of our sister and brothers who have been scattered and displaced, especially those from the Bor area, for the return to their homeland with the encouragement and co-operation of their communities, leaders and civil authorities of origin.

In conclusion, we appeal that the people from Upper Nile who were either blocked or did not have an opportunity to participate in the conference be told about our deliberations and be encouraged to meet with us in the near future so that the East Bank peoples' peace process can be widened and deepened. This covenant reflects the will of the people represented at Liliir. It incorporates the resolutions of the conference (attached), and we urge that they be implemented with the full assistance and protection of the civil authorities under all of the southern liberation movements. We hope that the friends of Upper Nile will support our efforts and consolidate our desire for peace.

Waat Lou Nuer Covenant

Waat, Sudan

6 November 1999

The Lou Nuer met in a People-to-People Peace and Governance Conference in Waat, Sudan under the auspices of the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) from 1-7 November 1999. Delegates came from all districts in addition to Lou who came from Malakal, Khartoum and foreign countries.

Today, we declare an end to years of internal conflicts among our people, battles between different factions, and at least three different military forces and civil administrations. Our internal strife has made us vulnerable to conflicts with our neighbors on every side, and the Government of Sudan has armed various groups within our midst to stir up confusion and destruction. We have sealed this Covenant, with its included Resolutions, by the traditional sacrifice of a White Bull (Tu-Bor) and with Christian worship.

We have met to establish a lasting peace, to build a common system of governance and to appeal to others to join us in rebuilding our communities and spreading this peace and reconciliation to all of south Sudan.

We have agreed to the following:

Peace

- An end to all conflicts among Lou Nuer
- Amnesty for offenses against persons and property prior to 1 November 1999
- Extending the hand of peace to Gaawar Nuer to our west and Jikany Nuer to our East. We stand ready to resolve any outstanding issues and build a permanent peace.
- Extending the hand of peace to all neighbouring people on the East Bank of the Nile, With the NSCC, we invite all Nilotic peoples on the East Bank of the Nile to send delegations in February 2000 for a People-to-People peace

Governance

- Strongly urge our political and military leaders to construct civil and military governance systems that will unite all Nuer people and contribute to a reconciled and united south Sudan. This system must be outside the control of the Government of Sudan or persons working in Government of Sudan controlled areas of the country.

- A separation of civil and judicial cases and a rebuilding of the civil judicial system;
- Empowerment of chiefs to handle all local judicial cases and a rebuilding of the civil judicial system;
- Establishment of a police system that will maintain order within our communities and be accountable to the civil administration;
- Instruct all civil administrators to be accountable for their areas, to the people and to work in a close and transparent manner with indigenous and international NGOs;
- Require the regular military and the White Army to demobilize all children under age fifteen;
- Commit ourselves to development of water resources that enable us to have permanent communities, the establishment of schools for our children, health care for our people, and food to sustain ourselves all year

Appeals from Lou Nuer

- To all Nuer; Appeal for unity, peace and shared responsibility for security within a unified political administration.
- To all Neighbors; We declare a unilateral, permanent cease-fire and express our desire to build peace with our neighbors.
- To all Southerners; We appeal for an unending commitment to unite south Sudan so that security is assured, our political objectives are realized and our rights protected.
- To all Friends of South Sudan: We appeal for partners who will help us rebuild our communities, strengthen our civil administration, and provide support for our common security.

A Word of Promise

We will protect this peace against anyone from within our ranks or who would come against us from the outside attempting to destroy our unity and peace. For this peace we are willing to die so that our children may live in peace and enjoy this god land that God has given to us.

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Persons Interviewed

1. Dr. Haruun L. Ruun, Executive Secretary, New Sudan Council of Churches, Nairobi
2. Harold F. Miller, Mennonite Central Committee, Sudan Representative Nairobi
3. Christian R. Manahl, regional Political Adviser, European Union, Nairobi
4. Bertha Kadenyi Amisi, Regional Policy Analyst, ACTIONAID, Nairobi
5. Cirino Hiteng Ofuho, Assistant Professor of International Relations and Politics; Sudan expert, United States International University
6. Dr. Makumi Mwagiru, Director, Centre for Conflict Research, University of Nairobi
7. Attended a Regional Conference on the Prevention of Conflict and Peace Building May 16-18, 2000, Nairobi Kenya Venue: Kenya College Of Communications Technology Mbagathi Campus—Sponsored by PACT, MWENGO, Nairobi Peace Initiative
8. Telar Deng, Assistant to the Executive Director, (Peace Desk) New Sudan Council of Churches, Nairobi
9. Margaret Midogo, Logistics Officer for Liliir Conference, New Sudan Council of Churches, Nairobi
10. Canon Clemend Janda, Secretary General, All Africa Conference of Churches. Southern Sudanese and attendee of the Liliir Conference
11. Paul McDermott, USAID/STAR, Nairobi
12. Elizabeth Otieno, Assistant to Executive Secretary, NSCC