

United States Institute of Peace  
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Sudan Experience Project

**Interview # 34 –Executive Summary**

*Interviewed by: W. Haven North  
Initial interview date: October 19, 2006  
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On the prospects of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) being successfully implemented, the interviewee concludes that as long as the international community continues to show an interest in the CPA and remains engaged, the CPA has every prospect for success until the time of the elections. However, there are dangers that, if the North continues to not release funds in a timely fashion to the South, the people in the South will become frustrated, which will create avenues for militias, demagogues and warlords to emerge. Also the Government of South Sudan (GOSS) should be aware that the international community requires good governance and accountability to avoid the issue of GOSS officials not being held accountable.

In the period before 2011, it is important that the structures of good governance are put in place in the South as well as in the North, even if the South does not opt for autonomy. Most people in the South seem to opt for self-determination and for South Sudan to be a state or independent. The leaders of the South know that they have to establish the institutions and mechanisms of governance, but they have not devoted time as to how these will work in reality. The interviewee considers it important that the U.S. is committed to ensure peace and prosperity in South Sudan and that it becomes governable. Otherwise, it may become a failed state with a disillusioned population.

By way of background, Christian Aid was directly involved with support for a South Sudanese gender officer, who became a Member of Parliament (MP) in the Government of National Unity—the CPA referred to the rights of women. Christian Aid organized a national convention on how civil society would be governed. Out of that came the formation of the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development and a Judiciary. So they laid the foundations for key governance departments of the SPLM, now the Government of Southern Sudan with staff training and equipment. They have supported civic education for the civil society. Christian Aid has also sponsored workshops with the participation of partner representatives from the North and the South on issues of human rights, livelihood, good governance, HIV/AIDS, access to justice and the rule of law—legal aid for the poor.

The word about the CPA is getting out but slowly, through workshops but it is not widespread. In the South, the knowledge has raised expectations for benefits in hospitals, schools, farm support, etc. In the North, the view is that the CPA was signed for the benefit of the South as a form of appeasement; the Northerners are not as engaged and in rural areas; there is no evidence of benefits.

On CPA sub-agreements, it was agreed that each state in the South should have a constitution; they have been drafted but not approved by the North federal Minister of Justice.

There are issues with provisions on self-determination, and state boundaries, etc. The Commission on Boundaries report was not accepted by Khartoum—a clear violation of the CPA. On wealth sharing, the Southerners are not informed on the amount of oil being produced and thus cannot validate the revenue they are due. On the security protocol, there is no movement on troop reduction and SPLM and Government of Sudan soldiers are still holding their positions, which risks a bad security incident. On monitoring, there is a mechanism, but it is not working. The UN is not doing much.

On lessons and conclusions, the interviewee suggests: the active and continuing engagement of the international community; clear CPA implementation plans; improved implementation capacities, particularly in the south; clear modalities for monitoring at the community level. On Darfur, we should keep hammering on the need to send United Nations (UN) forces into Darfur to ensure the people in Darfur have a better quality of life, but also not forget the obligation to ensure the CPA is implemented.

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*Q: What has been your association with the CPA and the Sudan conflict?*

A: My NGO has been mainly through building -- supporting some of the Government of Southern Sudan institutions, particularly the judiciary and the minister of legal affairs and constitutional development because they are key implementing agencies of the CPA. I have also been supporting civil society organizations, primarily in the South to disseminate information about the CPA within the context of civic education. Through that I have been generally associated with the CPA.

*Q: What is your understanding about the CPA that brought it about and about the process of bringing it about? Were you associated with any of that?*

A: Yes, but not directly. Before the ceasefire between the SPLM (Sudan People's Liberation Movement) and the Government of Sudan in the Nuba Mountains, I was part of an advocacy group called the Nuba Mountains Working Group. At that time, the Government of Sudan had denied humanitarian access to the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile so we formed what was called the Nuba Mountains Working Group. We were sending out advocacy materials on the effects of the denial of access on the people of the Nuba. It was first quite helpful when the ceasefire was signed in 2002 in allowing for access between the Nuba Mountains and the other areas. So for me, that was the beginning of the process.

During the actual CPA talks, Christian Aid was directly involved in it, but at that time we had a gender officer, a South Sudanese lady who was quite well connected with the SPLM leadership. They were in Naivasha; we sponsored her to go there to lobby for the women's views to be taken onboard. Before then, most of the discussions were by men and not much was done about issues relating to gender. So we got her to go there and, on the sidelines, lobby the Southern Sudanese officials. It helped because later on we consulted closely with the woman. So for me that was a very good outcome that we were involved in with the CPA project.

*Q: Was her work evident in the CPA agreement?*

A: The CPA mentioned the rights of women, which before was not much. And in fact, fortunately for us she has been appointed an MP in the Government of National Unity assembly in Khartoum. She is currently the chairperson for the economic commission in parliament. So at least we have a voice there.

*Q: You said that your work with the ministry is important to CPA. Why is it important?*

A: Maybe some background will help. Before the peace agreement, when we had the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in South Sudan, the SPLM organized a national convention to discuss with its various wings and their communities on how the civil society would be governed. During that convention, they agreed that they would form a civil authority for the new Sudan at that time which would be something like the civil service or the institutions of government for the SPLM. Out of that came the formation of the Ministry for Legal Affairs and Constitution—at that time called a secretariat for legal affairs and constitutional development. Then they decided to establish a Judiciary. So we being supported an office for the Ministry's legal affairs section; we bought them computers and stationery and we helped them become established. We also supported setting up the Judiciary and recruiting some officials. Then, luckily for us we secured USAID (United States Agency for International Development) funding for a program called Building Accountable Societies in Sudan, BASIS, and that really helped us purchase equipment like radios, vehicles to enable them to communicate with various regions. It really was the precursor of establishing both the Ministry for Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development and the Judiciary. We laid the foundation for those key governance departments of the SPLM which has now become the Government of Southern Sudan.

*Q: Can you describe in more detail what some of those activities were?*

A: What we did was, for example, for the Judiciary—it is now called the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development, but, at that time, it was called the Secretariat for Legal Affairs—we sent some of their people for training in at a law center in Kampala. It is called the Law Development Center. We sent them for training so that they would know the rules of judges. We also sent the registrar for the Supreme Court for training. We also sent the registrar of companies and the gazette officer to Kenya; the two of them will understand the processes of governance. Still under the USAID funding, we organized basic management training for key top officials from the judiciary, from the Minister of Justice, from the police, from the prison service and wildlife. We saw how people lack management skills so we brought in a consultant to train them. We also provided them with training in basic use of computers.

*Q: How is that working out?*

A: It has helped because when the SPLM became the Government of South Sudan: the ones in key positions and the skills we provided them is helping them, although I know they are getting more skill training elsewhere. Currently for example, we brought 28 lawyers and top officials from the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development here to Kenya to be trained in English language literacy, because most of them had had their training in Arabic institutions. And so we brought them here; they are currently being trained at the British Counsel in English language literacy. These lawyers will then be sent to their states to be in charge of the various branches of the Ministry of Legal Affairs in the 10 states of South Sudan.

*Q: Are there other activities you were engaged in?*

A: Yes, that is for the government institutions. For the civil society, what we have done so far is to support some of our partners to undertake civic education programs. For example, on issues of civic education and to disseminate information about the CPA. In fact, two months ago Church leaders from the Sudan had a meeting here in Nairobi. They regretted that many people were not

aware of the provisions of the CPA including even government officials. So getting our partners to train people and make them aware of the provisions of the CPA is a key to ensuring that the CPA's provisions are known and respected.

*Q: Is this word getting out now about the CPA?*

A: Yes, it is, but slowly because we are not covering the whole of the Sudan. We organize workshops and then bring both the traditional leaders, usually there are women leaders, and government officials to a workshop to inform them about the provisions of the CPA. The coverage is not as wide as one would expect, but it is getting to the areas where our partners are moving. I am told one of the top government officials—maybe the vice president—went to an area in northern Sudan and because people knew about the CPA, they could ask why they were not seeing some of the promised benefits of the peace agreement. For example, if the Government of South Sudan was getting revenues from oil, why were not they seeing it on the ground in schools, hospitals and roads. So at least people can now ask questions of the authorities.

*Q: What was the reaction of the people when they heard about the CPA?*

A: It depends on where you are. In the South they are happy that the CPA has been signed and their expectations are that one, they will have schools built for their children, hospitals provided, road networks and they will be provided with support for farming. In the North, it is more like the CPA was signed for the Southerners and as a form of appeasement. So the level of engagement in the North is not as high as in the South. Unfortunately in many of the rural areas that I have been to there is no evidence of any benefit so this for me is a cause for concern actually.

*Q: This is in the South that there is no evidence?*

A: Yes, because you talk to -- traditionally there are chiefs, teachers, and they tell you they expected outcomes like hospitals, more schools, tools to farmers are not there so they cannot see the expected benefits. For me this is something that needs to be addressed as soon as practicable.

*Q: The CPA had a number of sub-protocols on the security, wealth sharing, oil, boundaries and the national constitution review. Do you recall any of those?*

A: In fact, I do. I will give you some examples of some of the provisions that are not being really respected. One, the agreement stipulates that each of the states in the South should have constitutions. Now these constitutions have been drafted, but they have not been approved and according to the provisions of the CPA they have to be approved by the federal Minister of Justice in the North. I am told, but this is anecdotal, that he is demanding that they take out three key provisions from these constitutions, for example that they should move out issues relating to self-determination at the end of the interim period; they should take out issues relating to state boundaries.

You cannot have a state without it having a constitution nor can you say have a state that does not have a boundary. These are real examples of frustrations of non-implementation of the CPA. Then, there was a provision that in Abyei —Abyei is one of the three constitutional areas; the

others are Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile—it was agreed that an Abyei Boundary Commission should be established, and they should come out with the clear boundaries for Abyei. The Commission has come out with its findings but the NCP (National Congress Party) Government in Khartoum has refused to accept their findings. These are clear violations of the CPA.

*Q: What about the wealth sharing arrangement, the revenues?*

A: The Government in the South is not aware of the output, for example, how many barrels of oil are produced per day. So they are not in a position to determine if the Government tells them that their share is 50 percent, they cannot validate that because they have not been informed about the output. Also during the peace talks some key minister positions were to have been given to the South but like the energy but this was not done.

*Q: Is the South getting any revenue from the oil?*

A: They get a revenue, but for the Southerners to have confidence in the revenue amounts that they are getting from the North, they should know the oil production per day or per quarter or whatever, Then, they can estimate that for a quarter so many millions of barrels were produced and this is how much was sold so then can know they are getting their 50 percent of the actual production. They do not have those figures.

*Q: What about the security protocol, the deployment of troops?*

A: In most parts of South Sudan the Government forces have not been redeployed; they are still holding their positions. What people are afraid of in areas where you have both SPLM soldiers and the Government of Sudan soldiers, there could some bad security incidents. Luckily, it has not happened but it is possible. The Government of Sudan has not as yet redeployed the soldiers that it was supposed to—the troops that it was supposed to redeploy from areas in the South.

*Q: So that is not being implemented well?*

A: No, I do not think so because from what some of my key informants in the South Sudan tell me there is no movement in troop reduction at all in key areas.

*Q: What kind of mechanism is available for monitoring the CPA and trying to keep it on track?*

A: There are mechanisms involved in the UN efforts. I have my problems with those types of arrangements, because so far from what I have seen, they are not really doing much. I have read both in the Government and in civil society how they expected some strong linkages between the monitoring body and civil society. These civil societies are in touch with the communities on the ground, and they can come out with clear modalities on what issues to monitor. Although, yes, I know there is a mechanism, I do not think it is working because they do not have real routes and access to where it matters.

*Q: There was some question about not all of the local community groups having been involved in the CPA. Do you find that the case and a problem?*

A: I am not going to say yes or no, because I remember during the CPA negotiations diasporas and many of the Southern groups, which were not part of the SPLM alliance, agreed that they would support the initiative for peace talks. Now after the peace agreement, there were attempts at South-South peace talk dialogues so that whatever differences there were would be resolved. But we are told that the Government in Khartoum is actively discouraging these talks. In fact, the Government in Khartoum is actively supporting the formation of militias in the South to create havoc especially in Upper Nile, in Junqali and in Equatoria. Left to themselves the various groups in the South would like to bring a closure to issues, but they are actively encouraged to be the spoilers.

*Q: What has been the role of the international community, both in the bringing about the CPA and the follow up?*

A: Honestly, if the international community—and this time I am talking mainly about the U.S. Government, especially the current government and the United Kingdom (U.K.) Government—had not taken a strong role during the peace-talks it would have fizzled out. I would like to single out the appointment of Senator Danforth and his British counterpart; they really did very good work. During the peace talks I am aware that some of the members of the international community even gave position papers on legal issues so that the negotiators would understand the implications of things. So yes, definitely the present U.S. Government and the Tony Blair Government have played a key role. And, of course, I know the Norwegians have played a big role. Unfortunately I cannot, apart from the Kenyan Government, say that much for the other African countries. The Kenyan Government played a key role.

*Q: What do you think the international community should be doing now to keep the CPA on track and come out with a positive result?*

A: I have two tracks on that. One is on the side of the governments. One is the danger of the CPA being forgotten or being sidetracked by the issues in Darfur. The international community should keep engaging seriously to ensure that the CPA is implemented and that both the governments of South Sudan and the governments in Khartoum adhere to the provisions of the CPA. Talking still about the international community, one of the weaknesses of the CPA was that it did not take into account the actual implementation of the CPA on the ground. I know, of course, we had what they called the trained assessment mission by the World Bank and the UN. But currently the governance, such as in the South is very weak.

Two, there is no clear program to use the resources or the energies of soldiers to be demobilize. In this present age, it is possible for people like demobilized soldiers, who are left alone, to be used as spoilers; they could be used by anybody. If the international community, the businesses and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) worked with, for example, demobilized youths, trained them to be workers' brigades with skills, they could help in the construction of roads. Here I am looking at partnerships between big business and NGOs and other sources so that the NGOs can relate to communities and then business can then help in establishing big business. It is important for business from the West to come and help invest, train the youths and people, to provide and insure that there is employment, commercial activities. That will help us because we have established good governance.

This is the time for the international community, both governments, business and NGOs to come

out with a firm strategy on how to help secure the peace, because the way I see it if say there is good governance in South Sudan then Darfur will be also encouraged. If they opt for peace there will be employment for their people, good governance structures will be there and then they will not have any recourse to arms and rebellion.

*Q: Is there any other role that the international partners should be taking in keeping this thing going?*

A: Yes. I know there is a multi-donor fund that has been established to support the activities. For example, I know the vice president of Sudan, Salva Kiir, recently launched a 200 day action plan for development in the South, but I do not know to what extent they are involved in it. And if it fails then there could be disenchantment so it is important for the international community both the UN and the United States (U.S.) and Great Britain to ensure that structures are put in place, because there are fears that if you have top officials in both the South and the North who are not held accountable or who do not have structures to support them it could lead to corruption and other issues.

*Q: Are there any preparations being made for the elections that are coming up and for the 2011 referendum?*

A: No, for example, the CPA clearly states that a census should take place in the second year, but it has not been done. The suspicion is that the North especially wants to delay the implementation of most of these provisions so that by the time it comes for elections no structures have been put in place. The idea was to start a census and then start civic education for people to know if they are to vote. No such foundations have been laid and these are to be done between the first and the 30<sup>th</sup> in the second year, by now they should have established a census.

That is where the international community needs to come out with clear modalities for taking the key provisions of the CPA and then find ways of monitoring it. Here I can see the role of faith in the universities. It is in the U.S., for example. They can play a key role. Not only in monitoring the implementation of the CPA but also helping institutions in the South to be established. I know, for example, a couple of years ago, U.S. retired business executives, top civil servants, made themselves available along the lines of the Peace Corps. These are mature people who could be sent to help. I am sure there experienced professionals in the U.S. and the Western world who will be happy to help establish government structures, help establish chambers of commerce or business institutions in the South. Because there is lack of capacity in the South and they really need help. There was a lot of action put into the signing of the CPA, but now not much is being done to ensure that the provisions of the CPA are met. The people in the communities, youth, etcetera, are now disillusioned. If you have an army of disillusioned people, there is no telling how a demagogue might use the people.

The reason I bring this up is that I worked on development planning in Germany. What we did was to identify various areas, for example, in Ghana, such as counties or districts or towns, which were then twinned with a university and the university sent students to the country to prepare a development plan, share it with the local authorities; these became the development plans for the area. These are programs that I know the U.S. is good at. For me personally I do not see why we want to wait for South Sudan to become another Somalia; if people do not get what they want, then there can be the emergence of warlords.



*Q: We are interested in getting lessons that have been learned, which would be helpful in looking forward to other situations. What should have been done or should not have been done in the CPA process and its implementation?*

A: The first one is the active engagement of the international community in the process, especially the appointment of such people like Senator Danforth, to ensure that there is an open door to, say, the White House so that those involved in the peace talks realized that the international community is supporting them. Key expertise was provided with so that on issues on which they did not competence there were experts to provide them with assistance. Continued engagement by the international community is important. One key problem is the non-engagement beyond the CPA. There is a need to have come out with clear implementation strategies, and possibly even sanctions for non-compliance by parties to the peace agreement or the peace process. Unfortunately some people only react when they know that, if they do not live up to the undertakings, there are consequences.

*Q: You are suggesting that there are no implementation plans for the various subsets of the CPA? Is that what you were saying?*

A: Yes. No very clear implementation plans for the subsets; they were general. They should have gone beyond the statements of intent. They should have come out with clear strategies, work plans with details that could be followed with indicators. At the policy level without implementation modalities, it is difficult to hold anybody accountable.

*Q: Are there some other lessons that come to mind from observing the CPA?*

A: Yes, the other one is the assumption that both parties had the skills or the capacity to implement and here I am talking mostly about the South. They do not have, example, qualified professionals to implement the CPA and yet the people on the ground or communities or other people that want a CPA signed believed everything will be okay. Between the signing of the CPA and its implementation, there is a big gap. The next step will be to ensure that the mechanisms or institutions need to be put in place to ensure that the provisions of the agreement are implemented.

The third one, which I think was not done, is how to monitor the implementation. There were no clear-cut modalities, for example, on how to monitor at community level up to state level and then national level and then the international level. Because it is important to have this flow of information based on clear cut strategies and mechanism to ensure that, at any point, these could be monitored and people held accountable.

*Q: Is this capacity question only for the South or does it apply to the North too?*

A: I think for the North they have people who are competent. But the capacity to accept change and to adapt, I do not think they have them. The South people think that the Northerners are just accommodating them and that they are not really committed to the CPA. They lack the capacity in terms of being able to adapt, to accept that they will have to change their mentality and even ways of working. But in terms of skills the Northerners are very highly skilled people.

*Q: What do you think the outcome is likely to be by 2011 for the referendum? Are you positive about the two parts working together or not?*

A: When you talk to the Southerners, there is the suspicion that they will be fought or coerced or persuaded to vote for unity, because that is what the international community wants, but I do not think that is fair. It is important for them to be provided with information on civic education so that they have the ability to be informed about the rules and responsibilities and what is expected of them and whether they want to be engaged with the North after the six years. Most of the people that I have spoken to seem to opt for self-determination. That is, they want South Sudan to be a state or to be independent. But then, if that is the case it is important that they are made aware that they have friends, because if they realize they are not being supported in determining their future, they will be frustrated. Even then when they become independent, I do not know whether they will regard us as friends, because they will say we frustrated them. So it is important to give them the option to decide. But most of the people I have spoken to seem to want to be independent, then they can be more related to an English speaking country.

*Q: We were talking about the prospects for the CPA being a successful agreement. What further thoughts do you have on that?*

A: For as long as the international community shows interest and support for the CPA, it has every prospect of success until the time for the elections. For me though, the dangers are that if the North continues to not release funds in a timely fashion to the South then the people in the South might be frustrated. That will create avenues for militias and demagogues and warlords to emerge and that for me is quite serious.

The other issue for me and this is also important is that the Government of South Sudan should also be made aware that the international community has pledged good governance, accountability on its part. This should be demonstrated clearly so that we do not have the issue of ministers and top government officials not being accountable. It is important for the international community to engage with the CPA at all levels.

*Q: Do you think the Southern Government and community understand the implications of breaking off to have a separate country, what is involved in that, what it would result in? Do they understand all the things that would have to be done or dealt with?*

A: Not really, but for me it is an issue that goes back to the CPA itself because the top officials of the South are talking about peace agreement autonomy. They know that they had to establish government institutions and mechanisms, but they did not devote as much time as to how this will work in reality. The period before 2011 is a time when even if they do not opt for self-autonomy, it is important that structures of good governance are put in place in the South as well as in the North. Apart from Juba, you go to the various states and there are no institutions to speak of. It is unfair, and this time I am accusing the international community, to raise the hopes and expectations of the people of the South without helping them establish mechanisms that are to make them a going concern. It is as if they are being set up to be a failed state.

So it is important that whether they opt for independence or decide to be part of the North, there should be mechanisms for good governance; they should have access to good justice; they should have access to good water, human rights. If we espouse this in public forums, we need to

demonstrate it so that the person in the village will see it as important as somebody talking at the UN or in the EU (European Union) assembly.

*Q: So are there any other lessons that come to mind?*

A: Yes. I think the other lesson is that it is important for, now we are talking about the U.S., institutions and even the ordinary person in the ground to realize, that if we ensure that people in South Sudan become governable then, one, there will be no need to close the boundaries so that there is influx of refugees, that there is no room for people to use hungry youth as terrorists or to be used as suicide bombers. Because once you have a failed state or once you have a group of disillusioned youth, then you are creating conditions for terrorists. It is important for the voters in the U.S. feel a commitment to ensure peace and prosperity in South Sudan, with good governance, then everybody, not only the U.S., but the whole world is safer.

Because sometimes we think oh, the CPA has been signed so that is the end of it. The CPA imposes a lot of obligations on the international community to ensure that the reasons for the rebellion do not reoccur and whether in the context of cross border international terrorism or whatever we do not create opportunities to use people for their ends. It is important for the voters in the U.S. to know that we have a commitment to ensure that things move in this part of the world.

*Q: What is the impact of the Darfur situation on this whole evolution of the CPA?*

A: So far the attention is being diverted from the Sudan to Darfur. It should be the other way around, because if the people who are recruited to be part of the SLA (Sudan Liberation Army) or JEM (Justice and Equality Movement) do recognize that there is peace and success in South Sudan, then they will be much more cooperative. We should keep hammering on the need to send UN forces to Darfur to ensure that the people of Darfur have a good quality of life. But at the same time, we should not forget the need to help the CPA be properly implemented, because if people in Darfur agree on the peace and they realize that after awhile there is no benefit then, we will be going back to square one. The East of Sudan could also explode although I know they signed some peace agreement. So it is important that yes, we do what we can in Darfur, but do not forget that we have obligations to ensure that the CPA is implemented. And importantly, to hold both the Governments in Khartoum and Juba responsible to ensure that they keep their sides of the bargain.

*Q: Let us turn back to your own work. Is there some more detail on how that is working out and the things you are doing?*

A: Yes, in fact, our contribution is very small but we are taking a few steps. For example, before the CPA we managed the South Sudan program from Nairobi; we managed the programs in North Sudan from London. But after the CPA we were the first international NGO to organize a joint meeting between South Sudanese and North Sudanese NGOs in Khartoum. As a result of that, the partners, and this is for me very key, both Northern and Southern Sudanese partners identified three key areas which they do not have problems with. One was the issue of gender. Women in both the North and South are discriminated against, so they agreed that this is an area that they can work on. HIV- AIDS is one of these. Legal aid and access to justice is one of these

and also good governance. We have agreed with them that they will come together on joint programs in rule of law and access to justice like providing legal aid both across borders.

They will visit each other — this is key. Next month, from the sixth to ninth of November we are meeting again, we will bring the North and South partners to Khartoum to find out how we can help in build up their capacities. This is a bit sneaky, because with the Southern partners what we normally do is, if we organize training workshop in capacity building, be it basic management, financial management, we insist that our partners bring in officials from the local authorities because they do not have skills. It has worked very well because there is collaboration between civil society and the governing authorities. What we are hoping to do, but that is not explicit, is that if our partners from the North collaborate with our Southern partners, they will realize that NGOs and the government authorities can work together on issues, then hopefully the authorities in the North might be inclined to engage in more dialogue and even in joint activities with the civil societies. There is a big divide between the civil society and government structures in the North compared to the South.

*Q: These workshops include people both from the North and from the South, is that right?*

A: Yes. Partners meet from both the North and the South.

*Q: Is there a problem because you are a Christian NGO that the non-Christian groups will participate or not?*

A: No. In fact, it is interesting because when people hear of our NGO, they think of us as proselytizing. Our group is actually, for lack of a better word, the development wing of the churches in England and Ireland; we do not proselytize but we support issues on livelihood, human rights, good governance, and justice. Initially, there was a suspicion even in the North that we were coming to make Christians out of their people, but we do not have a problem working our partners in the North, some are basically Islamic institutions.

*Q: You are getting good cooperation from both governments?*

A: Yes. Initially, actually we started on the wrong foot with the Government in the North in 2002 because we published a document called The Scorched Earth. This was a document which showed that the Government of South Sudan was clearing villages around oil fields in the South so oil companies could come and exploit the oil. So we were not really very welcome. But that has died down and they realize that we do not, we are not against the Government, but we are just ensuring that peoples' lives are improved. So now, yes, we are on good terms, even registered in Khartoum. It took us awhile but we are a registered organization in Khartoum, we have established an office there.

*Q: Are there other activities that you are sponsoring between the North and the South?*

A: Yes. HIV-AIDS is one. And then this issue, too, about the rule of law and access to justice, providing legal aid to poor people. When we go to Khartoum in November, we will explore possible areas of collaboration.

*Q: You hold these workshops in the North or in the South or where?*

A: No, it is a twice a year thing. In May this year, we held a joint meeting between our North and South partners in Rumbek; that is in South Sudan. So the next one is in Khartoum. After the Khartoum meeting in November then during the meeting, they will decide in which part of South Sudan they want to hold their next meeting. So it is every six months but it rotates between the North and the South.

*Q: And the people are not afraid about going to the North or the North going to the South? They are not concerned about that?*

A: When we organized the first meeting in the North, the Southerners were quite enthusiastic to go there because some of their relatives were in refugee camps in Khartoum and since some had not seen each other for 10, 15 years, so for them it was good. But then when we invited the Northern partners to come to Rumbek in the South, there was a lot of suspicion as they, these Southern rebels are going to kill us; there is no security. It took us awhile to convince them that the place was secure and that they were not going to be attacked. And they were pleasantly surprised when they came and nothing happened to them. So at our level we are ensuring this form of dialogue and breaking of barriers because I think the Northerners regarded our partners as SPLM operatives, rebels who were acting on behalf of the Government. And then on the other hand, too, we found our Southern partners regarding these people as Arabs who did not respect them, they were frightened but that is why we brought issues that both could work with. Because issues on gender impacts both the South and North, issues on human rights were things that they could live with, and the same with issues on HIV-AIDS. So what we are trying to do now is to look at neutral and non-controversial issues, which both parties could work with and maybe hopefully they can then engage on other issues.

*Q: Are you aware of other organizations doing the same kind of thing you are doing between the North and the South?*

A: Currently, I know of an organization which brought some Northern partners, but we are the only organization which every six months brings our Northern and Southern partners to one room to discuss issues of common concern and to identify possibilities of joint collaboration. I am not aware of any other organization. We have done this on a twice-yearly basis and actively encourage close collaboration.

*Q: Are you thinking about other issues that you could use this technique on beyond the ones you have already mentioned?*

A: We acknowledge that capacity building is something that is not understood very well even between our Northern and Southern partners. So the meeting in November will address capacity building and identify capacity building issues that will benefit them. I am talking now from my experience in the South. If we build a capacity of our partners and we ensure that some of the Government officials are part of the capacity building, it improves the performance even though they are government institutions. So hopefully by improving the capacity of our partners who deliver services this could impart elsewhere.

*Q: When you say partners, you mean both North and South partners?*

A: Yes, North and South partners. In fact we are even trying to —but the term Northern partners and Southern partners is difficult —see how we can come out of that but yes both our Northern and Southern partners.

*Q: Are there any other areas that we have not touched on that are important to you?*

A: There is this issue about returnees from the North. Now, if in coming to the South, nothing is done to receive them, like getting them work, health... Returnees are southerners in the North who are returning to the South. Not much has been done in terms of receiving them in the South. What has been happening is heads of households from the North have gone to the South to see whether then can return. It is only those who are desperate to return who are doing so. So it could be a problem.

*Q: Are there other issues like that that you are concerned about?*

A: What I can say though is that I know some of my South Sudanese friends are compiling a list of what they think are non-compliance of the CPA by the North.

*Q: Are you optimistic for the future of the country?*

A: Optimistic, yes, but on condition that the friends of Sudan like the U.S., the UK and Norway continue to be actively engaged with the CPA.