

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

Interview # 58 – Executive Summary

Interviewed by: Barbara Nielsen
Initial interview date: February 12, 2007
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The interviewees represent the Civilian Development Corps, which provides volunteers with MBA's and some years of experience to assist the newly established ministries in south Sudan. The interviewees describe the work of their MBAs with the Ministry of Labor, devising internal staff training programs and training trainers who can then assist in small business development. Other MBA volunteers are working with the Census, Statistics, and Evaluation Commission, which was very far behind in its work; they have organized the Commission by creating job descriptions, developing a budget, establishing structures for financial management and training staff to perform financial management functions.

With the directorate for private sector development, an MBA is working in Juba to put into place procedures, job descriptions, and a budget. In sum, the newly established ministries and governmental organizations in the South which were established by the CPA have required outside, organizational assistance in order to get up and running. This need did not appear to be adequately contemplated by the CPA.

In addition, the interviewees described how the MBA volunteers have gone out into the private sector to try to cultivate from within some rudimentary enterprises, and to graduate them into proper small businesses. Some of the obstacles described by the interviewees include the security problems created by the Lord's Resistance Army, something not foreseen by the CPA, as well as obstacles created by the GOS, including a refusal to give necessary visas to incoming personnel until, according to the interviewees, high level international pressure was brought to bear.

The most serious criticism of the CPA is the seemingly overly ambitious timetable for the national census, elections and referendum. Extreme challenges come from the need to organize from the ground up the necessary ministries and governmental structures in the South, as well as the need to offer education to a largely illiterate population on the meaning of the elections and on the provisions of the CPA. This last task, in the view of the interviewees, has not yet been handled effectively.

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Q: Let's start with your project that involves assisting the new ministries of the Government of South Sudan. I understand from what I've read that you have worked with the ministry of finance and the ministry of information. Could you describe your project, who you have on site and what your goals are.

A: Well, we have, on the ground, the primary sort of assistance mechanism from Citizens Development Corps, which is members from our MBA Enterprise Corps, our long term business advisors who spend fifteen months in Sudan working with government agencies and working with businesses directly. These people all have Master's degrees from U.S. schools and a few years of experience, and they actually volunteer their time in southern Sudan to help with improvements in the business environment and improvements for businesses specifically.

Right now we have five MBA Enterprise Corps advisors on the ground in Sudan, some of whom have been there since last July and some who have been there since last January. The two that have been there since January 2006 have worked mostly with the Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation on sort of pretty basic issues, in terms of getting an organizational development plan together, putting the finances together, doing a budget for the Commission, so very general HR issues and finance issues and then when needed on specific projects related to getting the census done. It was a center and then they upgraded it to a commission.

Q: And is it one of the fourteen commissions established by the CPA?

A: Yes. So there have been two MBA's; they started in Rumbek, Southern Sudan, working out of the offices there, working full time with the commission. They did a few things for the ministry of finance. They helped with the budgeting for the ministry of finance, some organizational development work, some coordination work as well. But their work has primarily been sort of as attachés, maybe, with the commission.

There are four MBA's who arrived in July, one of whom has since left for personal reasons. So the three new MBA's have been working, one with the ministry of labor, working on their training programs for their staff internally, training trainers for ministry

of labor staff so that they can then work with small businesses: training them to do a business plan or to apply for financing, etc. They also have been working with the ministry of commerce, specifically with their new directorate for private sector development. This directorate is in about the same place as the commission was six months ago, in that they're just up and running and they're in the process of preparing their human resources plans and their budgets and just very basic items, starting from the ground up in developing a ministry, basically. So they have been working for a while with the ministry of commerce.

And then we have two more MBA's, the other two, that have moved to Wau in Southern Sudan. They are working with the state ministry for planning, working on economic development, sort of across the board in Wau and also working on coordination issues between the state ministry and the national ministry.

Q: Let's go back to the Census, Statistics and Evaluation Commission, which is, I understand, very key for the upcoming elections, with the first step to provide voter rolls. Could you describe some of the challenges that your MBA's have encountered and how they've dealt with those to make progress?

A: Initially, on the arrival of the MBA's in January of '06, the center had only fourteen employees working on state constitutions, basically coordination activities to establish some kind of work for the development of the state constitutions, in addition to their other duties for the center. Those can be summarized as trying to create a database for all the line ministries, so that the data is used for millennium development goals or other economic data.

Those fourteen people, they were working in an emergency mode; they had no defined goals. Each employee did whatever was required at the time. That was needed because there were very few employees trying to do a lot of activities. So that kind of operation created a lot of gaps and a lot of initiatives were started and then abandoned halfway and so forth. That created a lot of confusion. So the first task was to try to stop that mode of operation and create a little bit of sanity, bringing sanity to the operation of the center.

Of course, it's kind of fixing things in flight, and as the CPA has been signed and approved, the center's role was well defined in that agreement and they could not make the transfer into assuming that role from this emergency mode. Our MBA's were trying to devise a plan that will bring this sense of order into this institution. I think the center was formed in 2002 and was busy doing its work, so they could not transfer easily. Our MBA's tried to work with the center's people and put them in a kind of order, so that they have defined job descriptions. That was going against the culture of the center and that was a major challenge for them.

Also, the appearance of our experts, they were a little bit younger.

Q: Than their colleagues at the center?

A: And they were new to the culture and to the country, so the first few weeks it was very difficult for them to be accepted. Those are the main challenges that we had to deal with.

Q: They're organizing the center or the commission to carry out these tasks and at some point, then, they managed to get the organization established. Have they begun carrying out the census work or the pre-census work? How's that going?

A: Actually, they have several partnerships with international organizations who are technically mandated to help them. One of them is the U.S. Census Bureau. There were some experts there, trying to do the technical work with the center. They needed a lot of additional employees and they were not sure how to go about ramping up the number of employees, *i.e.* setting priorities, who they should employ first. They were also restricted by physical space. The office space they had was limited. Also the expertise needs were to be built. Before, they were good at enumeration and capturing data, but they could not analyze it or put it in a meaningful way. It was very limited. Also, one of the very effective and active people in the center had to leave and join another organization. All this time the center was not operational and all the employees were on a voluntary basis.

Q: All of the Sudanese employees?

A: Yes. They were not receiving regular salaries. Some of the partnerships managed to get some incentives for some of the employees, just to keep them doing their work.

Q: How did these people live, if they weren't being paid for their work?

A: That's a very good question. A lot of people in South Sudan are not receiving regular salaries. There is a very strong extended family system that can provide for people. Everybody pools their resources and then they eat together.

Q: Although once this commission, for example, was established by the CPA, it would naturally follow that there would be funding for their activities. Did that occur?

A: That came very late in 2006 and after our MBA's developed a budget and regulated the center and later on the commission in a way that it is functioning as an organization.

Q: What was the reason for the delay?

A: One of them is there was a lot of conflicting news about receiving of the funds and appropriating the funds from the Government of South Sudan. The other is lack of financial management, which restricted them from issuing funds to the administration. That is common for all ministries and commissions in South Sudan, until today, actually.

Q: I think that's a nice concrete example of how things are functioning there. There are lots of obstacles and when you say lack of financial management, do you mean the structures to manage the money or the personnel to perform the function?

A: I think both, in addition to the actual lack of means of transfer of funds: bank accounts and banking system.

Q: Let's move into the ministries a little bit, since I know you have some of your volunteers also working there, and you mentioned that they're in three different ministries. How would you describe what they've been able to do there and how that relates to the directives of the CPA?

A: Well, as sort of a caveat, there were some pretty serious visa issues. The Northern government decided to clamp down on visas issued to Americans in about October of '06.

Q: How did they go about clamping down? They said, "We're not going to issue any visas?"

A: They said that they would issue visas but that the visas were only good for travel within forty kilometers of Khartoum. So that meant effectively no visas for the South. The South had been issuing its own sort of visas. They issued their own "travel passes" that everyone had been using but then the Northern government got a little testy about that and said that they would start really requiring visas for the South as well. So we had people in country from July until about October and then they pretty much sat in Nairobi for almost two months.

Q: "In country?"

A: They sat in Nairobi. So they worked. They actually went and did a survey in one of the refugee camps where there are a number of Sudanese refugees who've been living there for many, many years. We're about two months behind on our program implementation because we had this pretty disastrous visa issue.

Q: That has not actually been resolved?

A: It has. They're back in country as of January 8th.

Q: What kind of visas did they get? The government finally decided, "Well, let's give them visas for the country?"

A: Yes. The major restrictions have just sort of gone away.

Q: What do you think was the cause of the change of heart?

A: I think that various other governments put some serious pressure on them to stop. The humanitarian people were having trouble getting in. Everybody was having trouble getting into the country and I think that there was some pretty significant pressure from

high levels to get them to stop acting like that. So, good for us, anyway, we're back in the country.

In Juba we have an MBA working with the director for private sector development, which is under the ministry of commerce. The directorate has a brand new director who worked for an NGO, actually. She's Sudanese but she lived in Uganda for a long time, working for a Western NGO. So then she became the director of private sector development. Something that's sort of interesting, I think, is how hard it is to find very qualified high level staff to be the ministers and to be the sort of mid- and high level bureaucrats in the government, at least from my experience. They're just pulling people from wherever they can find them, that have good enough educations, some management skills, etc. So the staff are not always prepared for their jobs. So this woman has been hired to be director of private sector development, which we hope is going to be a big deal, but it's brand new. In August, it had been open for about two weeks. And again, it's sort of like what our MBA's faced with the commission, in that they don't have any HR policy, no procedures, job descriptions, a budget. So I guess it's sort of starting from the ground floor on "How do you start a ministry?"

Q: So the CPA has specified there will be this ministry. Then after that, did it specify all the details or the marching orders for setting up the ministries, given that there was no comparable structure, apparently, in the South up to that time?

A: It seems like there was a directive to set up this directorate and hire a director and then I think it's up to the director to staff and manage. Meanwhile, the Multi-donor Trust Fund has allocated something like \$21 million to develop the private sector. And they have the initial project proposal or the IPP developed and they were looking to the ministry of trade and commerce, one of the major ministries participating in this IPP.

We saw that the directorate for the private sector within the ministry of trade would need a lot of support to be able to develop the strategic frame and the work plan for such a project and that's why we embedded two of our MBA's in there, to primarily work with the directorate staff in developing these tools and projects, in addition to their mandate, which we developed way before the creation of this department, which was to go out into the private sector and to try to cultivate from within that private sector some rudimentary enterprises and graduate them into proper small businesses and hopefully medium sized businesses.

Q: Small businesses, in the South Sudan context, how would you define those?

A: At the moment they are basically small traders, highly oriented towards the consumer sector, with very little productivity. It's basically people going to the neighboring countries, buying goods, coming in and selling them. It's probably what you'd classify as micro, in this context, in this country. What you'd call small in Southern Sudan is probably micro in many, many places. Probably what can be classified as small businesses are those who have shops and help these people shuttle in all the goods. The bulk of it is just small trade, micro trade. So the idea was to hold focus group

discussions within the community, try to select people with business skills, build them up into small businesses. At the fact that there are major institutions working with the ministry, trying to improve the private sector in South Sudan and the lack of trained personnel, prompted us to put some of the time of our specialists into that as well, working from that end with the public sector and with the private sector and try to create something.

Q: And they're working throughout South Sudan or are they concentrated primarily in the towns? Do you have a number of little clusters of enterprises?

A: From what we have seen in South Sudan, most of the businesses are concentrated in urban centers and that's why we wanted to position our people in the urban centers and small towns. In the countryside I don't think businesses have developed. It's going to take some time to go out into the country.

Q: The reason I was asking that was to touch on the security situation, because in general terms we hear a lot of criticism about the militias that were supposed to have been pacified, if you will. Of course, the peace accord is designed to bring peace and in order to have normal economic activity, people need to be able to count on a certain amount of stability and peace. Would you like to comment on that in terms of the environment where you're working, how big a factor is it?

A: I can say that we have plans, very tentative plans, to expand into Malakal, to put two more MBA's into Malakal, in July. We may decide not to do that, because there has been so much unrest in the last few months and it doesn't seem like it's really going to get better. It may get worse before it gets better. So, that is definitely a place where we may have to not implement the program there.

I feel like people are relatively safe. We were in Rumbek for a while; we had staff in Rumbek and there wasn't large-scale violence. There was just some, we call it intertribal, people stealing cows and then there are lots of machine guns around because of the war. So, someone would shoot somebody for stealing cows. So there are back and forth little skirmishes. I think we can say that from our observation that disarmament programs are not going as fast as they are supposed to. Pacifying of the militias is not happening. However, there are new security arrangements around the towns but not in the towns. Most of the towns are secure.

But insecurity is affecting the prices of commodities in towns. It's what most of the participants in our focus groups have highlighted, that one of the factors hampering the development of the private sector is lack of security in the towns. That's causing a lot of trade disruption in movement of goods and causing prices to increase.

In addition to that, things like lack of proper taxation, passing through checkpoints where they're paying a lot of money to people who they don't know who they are, and so forth. That's also adding to the prices of goods.

Q: Let me see if I understand that. People who are traveling are obliged to pay “customs duties” or something at different checkpoints and these taxes are not really part of the government’s plans, in an official sense.

A: Most goods come in from Uganda or Kenya and a lot of it by road. So there’s quite a potential for abuse all the way into the country.

Q: So the militias establish checkpoints?

A: Yes, probably some more organized than others. I think it depends on the group and the Ugandans, the LRA.

Q: Yes, I’m familiar with the Lord’s Resistance Army. I don’t know all the things that they do. Please tell me what the Lord’s Resistance Army is doing in your area.

A: I’m not sure if they are still active in that area since the talks started taking more and more formal shape, the talks that were happening in Juba, and now are suspended. However, in the past, early 2006, they were fairly active in disrupting the aid routes, hijacking vehicles on the roads, stopping trade and so forth. That was one of their major disruptive activities in the area. It’s partly because their funding comes from various shady sources, including, we think, the Northern Sudanese government. But they’re not, they basically, at least from what I understand, the LRA soldiers are basically left to fend for themselves in terms of food, in terms of provisions, which is what they do in northern Uganda; they raid and pillage villages and then in Southern Sudan it’s the same situation.

There is this situation where there are peace talks and then large groups of soldiers, large groups of LRA soldiers, are sort of outside the towns just waiting around for these peace talks but with no funding, nothing is provided to them. And obviously, what they did is they stole from people on the road and people are hurt and the mayhem ensues.

Q: It seems that since the SPLM and the SPLA were a fighting force they know something about combat.

A: Well, their vice president is officially brokering the peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government. So, I think the thinking is that a military action against the LRA by the SPLM would be pretty counterproductive in terms of the peace talks.

Q: I guess I would call it a police action, people who have some experience in guarding their frontier ought to be able to prevent the incursion of these foreigners.

A: I think the president of the South has mentioned that if peace talks and negotiations cannot curb the activities of the LRA they might resort to other means.

Q: Returning to the private sector development theme. How do you see that evolving in the next year? Will you have more people come?

A: We will have at least two more people in July, two more MBA's and if they don't go to Malakal - they were supposed to go work with the state ministry in Malakal- sort of like the Wau team is doing now, working with the state ministry, we will probably put them in Juba and probably working with one of the other ministries. The ministry of transport needs help. I just read the other day that there are fifteen kilometers of paved roads in Southern Sudan.

Q: You must have seen them all when you were in Juba.

A: I think so! I think they're all at the airport in Juba. So, all of the ministries, I think, just because they're so new, can all use some sort of organizational development assistance. I think that we will end up putting two more MBA's with another ministry or two ministries in Juba. We have, right now, actually one of our MBA's and this is totally by chance; usually we recruit for what our client asks us for. In this case, we happened to recruit someone who worked on the consumer price index, here in the United States. His job was doing the consumer price index and he went to Sudan and someone found out that that's something that he had the skills to do. Not many of us, I think, could do that. So he's actually working on developing the first consumer price index in southern Sudan.

It seems like very small areas where they're providing assistance, but in a lot of cases they're working from the ground up in building these ministries and in building all the bureaucratic roles and responsibilities that come with that.

Q: It's an important point, actually, that things are being created from scratch. Hopefully, people will not over-bureaucratize the struggling south Sudanese government. Now you're recruiting volunteers. You mentioned that you had requests from your client. In this case, who is your client?

A: Our client in this case, is sort of our prime organization. We are a subcontractor on this program and our prime organization is VEGA, the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance. It's an LWA under USAID that utilizes all organizations that use volunteers. There are about fifteen organizations under the VEGA umbrella and this program came through VEGA. So we are a bit beholden to our prime and then, obviously, the prime is figuring out what the ministries need or what there's a need for. Particularly the country manager will help us to decide where we need to provide the next volunteer.

Q: So your task is not to decide how many volunteers you need but rather you're told, "We need twenty volunteers" and then you recruit them and they're placed. If you had more people volunteering than you had slots, could you go back to your primary contractor and say, "You know, we've got some really good volunteers who would like to come. Could you absorb them?"

A: That would be nice, if that was the problem. Unfortunately, the way that it works is USAID awarded a grant for nine million dollars for three years to be split among partners, and under that grant we budgeted for x amount of volunteers at that time, etc. So

right now we're budgeted for eight volunteers total over three years, long term, plus two short-term volunteers. What we'll need to do it, and we've started this process of pushing hard, to say, "Look, we really think that our MBA's are useful. If USAID can come up with another nine million dollars, that will allow us to put even more people in the field."

From our observation we've seen there are needs for short-term volunteers in Southern Sudan to do quick capacity building. However, the need for long term supercedes that by miles and the type of volunteers that we supply are people who do real jobs and train multiple numbers within the local organizations. Given the years of struggle and so forth, a lot of people in South Sudan today have knowledge but they need formal training, and that will not happen over the short period. You have to sustain that for a longer period, a year or more, to be able to train someone you bring in to the level that they can perform a function as important as a financial manager or officer of an institution.

The person or persons who are doing that function now, they have learned it on the job and they have learned it with a limited kind of resources and information. They can keep books but I don't think they will be able to give you a financial statement or give you recommendations on the financial status of the organization. They can make simple budgets but they cannot make projections. And we are now looking into institutions being tasked with major issues such as the census of the whole country. With such capacity, I doubt if they will be able to deliver on this account, so that's why we have placed our people in that institution. That's why we routed our people into public institutions more than concentrating on the private sector.

The lack of policy, of economic policy and programs, where you have needs for repatriation of people, planning of services, how to use the resources that are now available for South Sudan, without the knowledge, I think the planners will not be able to develop programs addressing the actual needs.

Q: The problem that you see is not so much lack of funding? I know you mentioned the Multi-Donor Trust Fund and that seems to be a reliable and generous source of funding and of course AID has funding available.

A: The Government of Southern Sudan is ostensibly getting half the oil revenues that are being pumped out of Sudan, which is significant. They've gotten so far over a billion dollars worth of oil revenues and that's just the start. There's a lot of discussion about how they're not really getting half because of the various ways that the northern government has obstructed it, but they will be getting a lot of money from the oil revenues and putting that to good use will be difficult without better procedures for managing money, better plans for where to put the money. It's not that they're broke or that they're going to be broke anytime soon. It's managing the money that's going to be the bigger issue.

Q: That's the sense that I have, too, that money is not the major drawback but rather capacity to absorb it and keep people honest in using it.

A: The needs are great. They will need more money, for sure. We can all do with more money. But that amount coming in, there is no capacity to manage it properly. That's what we are trying to do. The earlier those systems are set up I think the better and the easier to manage that properly. If it's left for another two years, corruption is going to be really rampant and it's going to be very difficult to bring it back.

Q: I'm curious to ask you about the power sharing that you would be likely to observe in the South, because that was another feature of the CPA that's spelled out very nicely, that seventy per cent of the appointed positions in the states of the South would be SPLM and then twenty per cent for NCP and then another ten per cent for other parties.

A: In the South.

Q: Do you find that this is an issue with the ministries that you're working with, with the state governments that you're working with as well, because they have to put people according to the percentages; that may or may not mean they get the right people?

A: I think so. I can't speak generally but I can speak specifically with some of the people that we worked with. Just like anywhere, political appointees are not always very suited for their jobs. A lot of the people who were appointed had been pretty high level in the SPLM, or the SPLA, actually. They were generals or they were high-level bureaucrats, at least, in the SPLA and their reward for having fought for the South for twenty years was that they got a nice position. You can't exactly argue with that but it means that not everyone that is running the various ministries or directorates, it means that they're not necessarily the best people for the job.

Militias don't want to integrate with the main SPLA, probably feeling that they have been left out in the distribution of the spoils. Until November of last year most of the ministries had not assigned all of their staff to the jobs that they have in their structures and this is also a cause of the lack of cohesion within the SPLM, how to distribute these posts in various ministries.

Q: Sounds like they need one of your MBA's to sort things out there.

A: Of course, we think so.

Q: I guess that's beyond the CPA to sort out, too.

A: Yes. At this point it depends on what the minister is looking for and depends on what we can get funded.

Q: Maybe we can just touch briefly on the state ministry of planning in Wau. I believe you have some of your volunteers there. What has been the experience, in terms of their work there?

A: The Wau volunteers actually just arrived in Wau about a month ago, so they are still just getting their footing, just starting an office, etc. The minister was nice enough to give them some office space, a place to do some work. So the work with the ministry has not ramped up yet. What they are doing in Wau, in addition, though, they're finishing up the development of a small business training course that they'll use, but that all of the other MBA's will also use.

Basically it is an entrepreneurship training course where they have a series of focus groups in Rumbek and in Juba, trying to glean where the gaps in the market are that Sudanese entrepreneurs could fill, what are these goods being brought in from Uganda that technically could be grown in Sudan or could be created in Sudan. Right now, there's not much created in southern Sudan; most of it is brought in from elsewhere. So, of course, more jobs could be created, etc. There could be more production. There are also a lot of services. Right now, most of the hotels that are in the South are owned by foreigners; they're not owned by Southerners. There are a few hotels that are owned by southern Sudanese that are doing well and there certainly could be more. There is a glut of expats that are in the country right now and there are always government meetings and there's a lot of need for hotels and food services, etc.

So, they held these series of focus groups to try to determine what the needs are and how they could be met from within Sudan, as opposed to bringing in outside goods or services. And then, they developed this training course that will probably have, we estimate, about twenty people per course. I think right now they're planning to have two courses a few days a week. People obviously do have things to do during the day but then they can come and do this course in the evenings.

So the Wau group has been tasked with that, just because they were waiting for a while for their assignment to be ready. They were waiting for housing and all of that, all of the things to come together that they needed. So they have been working on the design of that course and it's just about done. We're just about to start it up in Juba and in Wau. They're working right now on finding appropriate people that want to take the course and that do seem like promising entrepreneurs.

It's interesting because that was the initial scope of work for all these MBA's, to work directly with the private sector and really not to work much with the ministries. Once we started the program, though, this was almost two years ago, now, it was recognized that there really was a need in the ministries for assistance. The census bureau was pretty far behind and a lot of the ministries are relatively far behind, based on where they should be, according to the CPA timeline. So we're trying to have everybody do a bit of both. We're trying to have them work with the ministries as much as possible, but then also try to service the private sector from the bottom up, as well. It's been an interesting program, so far.

Q: It's an amazing objective; you have a lot of very important work to achieve and doing it could absorb almost any number of volunteers.

A: That's what we think!

Q: I saw your list of participating universities, so it would seem that the response is there, as well, that there are plenty of freshly minted or youngish MBA's who want to do this.

A: Yes. There are a lot of people that want to go to Sudan, I think more because they've heard about Darfur and a lot of people have a little bit of misconception about the South versus Darfur. But as long as they're interested, we're happy to place them if they fit.

Q: It's the kind of work that gives you a lot of satisfaction, if you're actually seeing something good resulting from it and your expertise utilized to make peoples' lives better. It's something anybody would like to do.

Do you have any final thoughts in terms of drawing it back to the CPA, that future leaders and negotiators should take into account?

A: I would say that it's moving more slowly than the CPA designers would have liked. There could be more money, but in the form of more expertise. The census is way behind. They were supposed to do a kind of trial run in November of 2006 and it didn't happen because they weren't ready. The census is supposed to happen in November of 2007. All that we've been hearing is that they won't be ready. Then, can you do elections without a census? The elections are supposed to be in 2008. There could be a lot more attention paid to these seemingly uninteresting details. The census is not exactly newsworthy, exciting stuff, but it is, I think, pretty crucial to the elections, to the referendum, for secession and it's not moving very quickly.

Also, part of the issue is that people don't really know what's going on, people that live in the rural areas, they're not affected much by the CPA. The sort of amorphous CPA that was signed a number of years ago, most people, I would say, maybe they've heard of it but ...

Q: They really don't feel it's affecting their lives.

A: I doubt if they've even heard of it, especially in the countryside and by countryside I mean from 25 miles out of any town the people live in total isolation from what's going on at the moment. And if we are going to be true to what we have put in the CPA, in the form of bringing a democratic process to Sudan, I don't think that the Sudanese are prepared.

I had the chance of participating a little bit in the voter education program outside of the country and even being with educated people, well exposed, it was hard to do voter education and preparation for the election within a short time of six weeks and that has effected the turnout a lot, I think even in the U.S. The number of polling stations needed and so forth was not well investigated. In Sudan, I think that it's daunting in the period that has been prescribed, six years, until the referendum. Also, culturally, the way that the

communities have been organized, they are all following the chief or sub-chief and they do whatever has been told to them, unless we reach out deep into the communities and try to build a little bit of personal perspective on civic roles and on the government. Unless that is being tackled, I think elections in 2008 and the referendum in 2011 are going to give a very narrow view. They will decide the future of the masses without the participation of the masses.

There needs to be a better means of disseminating information, especially to folks that are illiterate, that don't have access to even good radio programs, forget television. There are very isolated places.

We have to design ways and means to reach the indigenous communities and to be able to speak to them in their own languages and to be able to simplify the messages that will really be grasped by them.

Even if we translated the CPA into every language spoken in southern Sudan, it wouldn't be.

...

Q: They wouldn't understand what's meant?

A: How can you tell a blind man what the color red means? He doesn't have the context.

Q: That seems to be a problem with no easy solution for the immediate future. You're trying to do nation building and pacification and meet humanitarian needs and all of those things at once.

A: Exactly. I'm not sure how it escaped the attention of the very smart people who devised the CPA. They know very well the conditions in their community and they should have realized that six years might not be enough to achieve all this. It's very ambitious, especially not having a very cooperative partner in the government of Sudan, that tries to delay everything. So locking ourselves into such a short time, I believe either you have already preconceived or predetermined the outcome, or you put yourself in a very uncontrollable situation, not manageable within that time. Although the period is good for the South to determine its future, it's also limited in how and when that democratic experience can have an effect.

Q: That's a good point. I want to thank you very much for sharing your expertise and your experience.