

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

**Interview # 74 – Executive Summary**

*Initial Interview Date: April 11, 2007*

*Interviewed by W. Haven North*

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The interviewee was active in advocating Sudanese women's participation in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The interviewee worked with the Women Waging Peace Network in Southern Sudan and visited Sudan in 2006. The visit included an assessment of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Consultations were organized with women from across Sudan with the aim of coming up with priorities and recommendations for increasing women's participation in the implementation of the CPA.

The CPA has been a landmark agreement and provides a powerful framework for reconfiguring the power structures in Sudan and building longer-term sustainable peace. The process of negotiating the agreement was mixed in its inclusiveness. The women involved in the negotiations were continually shut out of the process, which ultimately hurt the quality of the CPA and made it gender neutral which means discriminatory toward women. Women tend to be the largest marginalized group. The few women involved were from all over the South; there were some from the North but they did play a significant role in the decision-making. In addition to the question of gender, the women raised issues about the return of the refugees, the internally displaced, development, education, reconstruction of the South, security reform and the provision of services.

The leadership of General Sumbeiywo and John Garang (keeping the South together) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) were influential in bringing about the CPA, as was the United States.

The CPA's implementation is mixed at best; many of the components of the implementation have not happened or moved very slowly. However, some of the women are members of the Government of National Unity and believe it is a new framework for people to have a say, although the power and decision-making are still concentrated within the National Congress Party (NCP). The South has a new government and has a say; there is a relative degree of stability and peace in the South. There is frustration as to why funds have not been received and disbursed for concrete peace dividends. The main block to implementation is the NCP's fear of giving up its position of power and losing control of decision-making.

On Darfur, there has been considerable fragmentation among the rebel groups. The NCP has proved to be efficient in supporting groups against each other. The rebel movement in Darfur lacks coherent leadership. The Darfur Peace Agreement is defunct; there is an urgent need for a robust resumption of a political process with pressure on the Northern government. The UN and the African Union mediators need to take assertive leadership and make sure it is not an exclusive process as it was before.

The upcoming elections are on everyone's mind; the census is supposed to start in the fall; parties are vying for constituencies. The elections will happen, but they will be delayed.

The women's groups could be an important force for moving forward—absolutely. The international community could target assistance to capacity building for women's institutions. The Darfurians did create a gender expert support team from all areas of Darfur, which worked and succeeded in making the DPA a gender sensitive agreement.

Pretty much everyone strongly hopes for a united Sudan, but many in the South believe that the South will secede because the Northern government does not care about the CPA.

Re lessons for both the CPA and the DPA: broader stakeholder participation, especially to include the participation and interests of women.

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*Q: Let us start off with your providing a context for the interview: what has been your experience with Sudan and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement?*

A: For the last two years I have been part of our team advocating for women's participation in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I have been involved in advocacy related to working with our network members in Southern Sudan and elsewhere. We brought delegates to Washington and to New York to talk about women's perspectives on the peace agreement and roles in implementing it, and to advocate to senior U.S. and UN policy makers on how to strengthen the role of women in the implementation of the agreement with the overarching goal and premise and belief that that will strengthen the agreement overall.

*Q: Right. Have you worked in Sudan?*

A: I have. I first traveled to Sudan last July, 2006. I was there with our partner organization to do an assessment of the Darfur Peace Agreement. That was very much a Darfur focused trip. We were in Khartoum for two weeks and then Darfur—North and South—for about two weeks as well. While there, I spent some time meeting with and talking to our network members based in Khartoum who are focused on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and its implementation, and who are playing roles in the Government of National Unity and the new government.

Then we returned in November this past year, 2006, to organize two consultations. One of those was a national consultation that brought together women from across the country to take stock of the role of women in implementing the CPA and to come up with their priorities and recommendations for increasing women's participation in the implementation of the agreement.

*Q: We want to come back to Darfur, but let us start off with what is your understanding of the CPA and how it is relevant to what you have been interested in: what brought the agreement about and how was it negotiated, and what can be learned from that experience from your perspective.*

A: The CPA has been a landmark agreement and provides a powerful framework for reconfiguring the power structures in Sudan and building longer-term sustainable peace.

There is at least a possibility there, and some real hope for that to happen. Certainly there was more hope I believe, after the signing of the agreement and before the death of John Garane. Our perspective is closely linked to that of the women both in the North and in the South who were involved in negotiating the agreement.

In many ways the ultimate agreement was successful owing to the concluding structures of the negotiations and the powerful leadership of General Sumbeiywo and all the efforts that went into unifying the Southern Sudanese, so that they could negotiate on one position. That took a lot of time, but what finally happened was that they were able to stick together and, particularly, again under Garang's leadership, to make that work.

From my organization's perspective and the belief in the need for it to be an inclusive process, people feel it was a bit more mixed. There were some very strong articulate women leaders who were involved in the negotiations but very few of them. They were continually shut out of the process particularly as the stakes got higher and parties became more protective of their seats. So the women were the first ones cut out. Many women believed, and we believed, that ultimately hurt the quality of the CPA. It made it effectively gender neutral, which ends up meaning discriminatory toward women, because there were no particular provisions and measures in there that women could then hold the government accountable to.

*Q: Who were these women involved? Where were they from?*

A: A number of our network members, some of them are from all over the South. One was a commander in the SPLM (Sudan People's Liberation Movement). Others were living in the Diaspora in Kenya and organized and put pressure more from the outside as civil society groups. Some women were involved in the Sudan Council of Churches, and so not just working as women's groups but working as part of civil societies to end hostilities and to put pressure on the parties to negotiate in good faith.

*Q: Were there any from the North?*

A: We had much less involvement quite frankly with the women from the North who were actually on the teams. There were some intermittently; they did not play a very vocal or significant role in the actual decision making processes.

*Q: And while you mentioned that they were particularly interested in getting gender into the CPA, what were they actually pushing for? Did they go beyond the gender question?*

A: Yes, they certainly did. They brought in perspectives related to the return of refugees, related to development, related to education and the development and re-construction of the South in particular, related to internally displaced and provision of services, as well as the need for security sector reform and reconciliation. And many other issues that affect all persons in society.

*Q: They were involved from the beginning in the negotiation process or trying to be involved?*

A: A couple were, but most of them were not. They were excluded from the process, and had to advocate quite ardently to have any voice. But some did participate in components of the Naivasha Agreement and creating the Machakos Protocols.

*Q: There are views of those who said it ought to be exclusive in order to get an agreement and others who said it should be inclusive to address the question of different parties and different ethnic groups and the failure to do so was a cause for the CPA not being very effective or implemented. What did the women's group promote in terms of participation of other parties?*

A: In very general terms, women who tend to be the largest marginalized group really do feel that other marginalized and excluded voices need to be involved as well... whether that is more representation and participation by those who have been displaced or whether it is particular ethnic groups who are not involved or represented. Certainly it can make it harder to get an agreement, but ultimately if you do not have that broader buy in, then many of the women we worked with said, "We believe that you are going to have a weaker agreement, and you will not be able to implement it as well."

*Q: Because the women reflect different parties, different ethnic groups of the country, do they want to work together or are they all part of the same ethnic groups or societies? Because the South as been quite divided among itself.*

A: Of course, they did represent different groups, but you know quite frankly, I cannot tell you who in what group the most vocal women were from in terms of ethnicity.

*Q: What was the understanding among these people about why the North and the South decided to get together to negotiate at all? What do you think was causing them to?*

A: There was a combination of factors, including international pressure. The Sudanese Government did not want to feel isolated; it was responding to pressure particularly from the United States. I am referring to the government in the North. So they reluctantly agreed to come together. There was some degree of awareness that they were not winning this war militarily, and that it might be in their long term interest to come up with some sort of agreement that would not cost them too much, but that would placate all involved.

*Q: Were these women you talked about present at the negotiation time? Were they there when the negotiations were going on?*

A: There were some women on the negotiating teams at different times.

*Q: I see.*

A: But they would get shut out and excluded from the teams when the stakes became particularly high or it was an important meeting. So there were a few directly involved in the formal process, but not very many, a very small percentage. And there was no real voice for broader civil society and women's groups and others as observers; it was intermittent.

*Q: Did they give you any impression of how the negotiations went and what was significant in terms of making the agreement come about, apart from their having been excluded? They must have had some impression as to what was effective in making the negotiations move forward.*

A. The leadership, the strong leadership of General Sumbeiywo who was mediating, was very important as well as the leadership of John Garang in keeping the Southerners on one position; they also believed the IGAD (Inter Governmental Authority on Development) played an important role.

*Q: How about the international community? How influential were they in this process?*

A: Incredibly influential, particularly the United States, but also the IGAD partners.

*Q: OK, let us turn to the implementation of the CPA. What is the view now about the implementation of the CPA?*

A: It is very mixed at best. The people are pretty disappointed and cynical on many levels, because many components of implementation have not happened or have moved very slowly. All that said, some of the women who we worked with are now members of the Government of National Unity. They do fundamentally believe that, even though the power and decision-making are still concentrated within the NCP (National Congress Party), there is a new framework for people to have a say. The South really does have a say in that there is a relative degree of stability and peace in the South. There is a new Government of Southern Sudan. There is a lot of frustration with that, and the belief that there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding as to why the funds either were not received or have not been disbursed, and have not resulted in many concrete peace dividends.

*Q: Are some of these women in the Government of National Unity based in Khartoum?*

A: Yes.

*Q: What positions do they have in the government?*

A: They are wide ranging. The Minister of State for Agriculture is Dr. Ann Ito who is a member of our network. There are a couple of others such as a woman, who is a Minister for the Petroleum Commission. And then a number of parliamentarians and heads of committees, things like that. In the Government of the South in their constitution, women were able to advocate and achieved a provision indicating there would be a 25% set aside

for women in all layers of the Southern Government. And that put additional pressure on the government in Khartoum, on the NCP to do the same.

*Q: But these women who are in the government in Khartoum, are they able to be effective, with differing views?*

A: Yes, the layers of discrimination are many. Many of the men who are in the government are finding it difficult to be effective. Many of the women find it another layer of challenge in terms of being from the South and being women, that some of them are really trying hard and working hard and to have the confidence of their people and their parties at least.

*Q: Do you have an example of what the women are trying to do, like the one in agriculture or one of the others?*

A: Yes, the women in the South (including say J. Macumba who is the head of the economic committee in Parliament) have formed a women's parliamentary caucus with Sonia Hassen who is her counterpart in the National Congress Party. They are trying to build a cross party political caucus for women to work together. Then Ann Ito, she is the Agricultural Minister. She has been trying to reform her ministry and the way that civil service operates, to make it more efficient and bring in new management techniques and streamline and increase productivity; those are just a couple of things. There are some other parliamentarians like Pricilla Joseph who has been working to change the law. There are some very discriminatory rape and immunity laws; she is trying to circulate new draft language around those laws.

*Q: Are any of them aware of or knowledgeable about the Audit and Evaluation Commission which is responsible for monitoring the implementation? I do not know whether any of them are associated with that or know what is happening in that group.*

A: They are; I understood it to have a different name. I thought it was assessment. Is it the Assessment and Evaluation Commission?

*Q: Assessment and Evaluation; that is right.*

A: Yes. Ann Ito is the deputy head of that committee, so she is very intimately involved.

*Q: But is it functioning. It is very hard to find anybody who knows what it is doing?*

A: Yes, it is intermittently functioning. The National Congress party, at least according to them, has put up a number of roadblocks and has not accepted their recommendations.

*Q: What is the understanding as to what is the main block to getting on with the implementation?*

A: The willingness of the National Congress party; fear of giving up their position of power and lose control of decision-making.

*Q: Is there any evidence that that might change?*

A: Not that I am aware of.

*Q: What kind of pressures or what kind of influences are required to begin to open up the movement? From outside?*

A: Inside there are a lot of things happening that might help put pressure on the implementation. With the NCP there are a lot of divisions and differences of opinion on all of this. Others, trade unions, for example, have been pretty powerful in the past. If the SPLM can maintain itself as a party and develop its capacity to be an effective governing body and play a big role in the country, that would help. Then externally, the U.S. could certainly increase its pressure in terms of sanctions and things like that, as could others of the international community.

*Q: Is there anything happening now that appears to be...*

A: There has been a lot of talk about the U.S. plan B sanctions; targeted sanctions. It looks like it is possible those will be implemented including the divestment activities that are going on.

*Q: Let us turn to the Darfur situation. What is the understanding of where that stands? I gather there are many parties in Darfur, not necessarily a unified group or not? What is your understanding of the leadership and whether they are a cohesive group?*

A: I would say no. There has been huge factionalization among rebel groups. It has only deteriorated over the last year. The National Congress party has proven itself in the South, very efficient at providing rules, tactics, supporting groups against each other. That has really affected the rebel movement in Darfur. They really do lack a coherent leadership. It has been a huge challenge.

*Q: And then the peace agreement fell apart or is it still a possibility?*

A: As it stands, it is not viable. It is defunct. There is an urgent need for a robust resumption of a political process and another phase of negotiations. There needs to be pressure on the government in Khartoum to resume those negotiations and to recognize that a military solution is not working. The UN and the AU (African Union) mediators really need to create a strong framework to take assertive leadership in making that happen, and to making sure that it is not as an exclusive process as the one that led up to last years agreement.

A large part of why it failed is because it was incredibly disassociated from Darfur. The negotiations were in Abuja, and they were very unrepresentative and exclusive, and the



rebel leaders claimed to represent people. The People in Darfur had no idea what was going on and no stake in the process and no understanding of the agreement. Then, when it was signed, they just saw things get worse and not better.

*Q: What is the understanding about the capabilities of the leadership within Darfur to help provide....*

A: There are many people who really want the conflict to end and there are a range of different types of leaders, but there is an urgent need for a coordinated approach in terms of the international community working together to achieve a cease fire and hold unification conferences with the rebels.

*Q: Turning to the South, one of the major movements was to build the capacity of the Southern Government. How has that progressed, and what is its principal need in that area?*

A: It is progressing. Building a government from scratch is exceedingly difficult. Many of the people who have positions were commanders and were not managers in their former life. It has been really hard and slow to form the government institutions. But they have made progress in doing so. There were a lot of concerns about corruption and the basic capacity of individuals to create a functioning government. There has been a lot of money promised from the international community, but very little actual technical assistance has been provided to those who are trying to create this government.

*Q: Coming down the road there is supposed to be a census going on now, and then an election and then a referendum .Is anything happening in those areas? Is the census being planned; are there preparations being made for the election?*

A: Everyone is very concerned about elections now. That is really on everyone's mind affecting all kinds of political calculations taking place in Sudan right now, from the South through Khartoum. The census is supposed to start happening in the fall, and then elections in '09. All the political parties are vying for constituencies. There is a real desire and hope among people to make these democratic and free and fair, among the civilians anyway. There is also a lot of concern that Khartoum will do everything in its power, which is considerable, to skew them and to insure that they are not free and fair.

*Q: Do you think they actually will happen?*

A: I think that they will. They will be delayed, and there will be lots of problems and challenges.

*Q: Are there actual preparations underway?*

A: Yes, but I could not say definitively. I know there is a lot going on in terms of creating electoral law and things from the legal standpoint. I do not know how much in terms of voter education and awareness.

*Q: That is part of my next question. How much awareness do you think the general population in the South and the North have of both the CPA and what it means and the preparations for elections and the implementation process that has been going on? Do you think the population is sensitive to all of these? Are they aware of what is happening?*

A: It is very mixed. The many rural people are quite cut off from political happenings and have frankly much higher and more immediate pressing concerns and priorities that they are grappling with like basic livelihood issues. Much of the populace is unaware of the broader political developments like what is in the CPA or the DPA (Darfur Peace Agreement) and things like that.

*Q: Are there women's groups that are becoming fairly widespread in their organization?*

A: There are many of them, particularly in Khartoum, and there are also a fair number in Juba. A lot of women in the Diaspora or a lot of the women who were refugees lived in Kenya in Nairobi where they had access to outside thought and increased education and an opportunity for organizing and mobilizing. Many of them have come back to Sudan. Certainly there is a weakness in capacity across the board in terms of institutional abilities.

*Q: Do you think these women's groups could be an important force for moving forward?*

A: Absolutely.

*Q: What is needed to make them more effective or let them be more effective?*

A: The international community should more effectively target assistance in development support into the women's institutional capacity building. Basic technical skills in terms of grant writing and finance and management and leadership. Then, in terms of specific components of the peace process, the mediators, the international mediators in the AU or the UN and others who are providing financing etc. have a lot of leeway in designing that process to put pressure on the teams to ensure, say 25% or a minimum of women's participation, in delegations to the negotiations, and that they create and allow for observer groups of women.

*Q: How many discrete organizations of women's groups do you think there are roughly?*

A: It is a large number, in the hundreds, but I could not tell you how many.

*Q: So it is substantial in both the North and in the South.*

A: In the North and the South. I am really uncomfortable trying to articulate numbers. I am not sure.

*Q: You talked about having some workshops and bringing in people for consultations. What have you been doing in those workshops and meetings?*

A: We first brought a delegation of Sudanese women into Washington in November, 2004, before the signing of the peace agreement (CPA). Then we were involved in the Conference of 2005. We brought a number of small teams of women here at various times over the past couple of years for training opportunities and conferences. Both last year and this year, we brought a delegation of Sudanese women representatives from all over Sudan.

Everything we do is with a diverse group of participants representing different sides of the conflict. So we brought, in the last two years, women to our annual colloquium, which provides training at Harvard and advocacy opportunities in Washington and networking with women from other conflict areas. Then, in the last year, we had these to consultations in November where we do coalition building and strategic planning and assessments, of taking stock of the current situation and articulating priorities and recommendations and thinking through next steps. We did one of those around the CPA in November and one around Darfur.

*Q: And these were strategic plans that were written and agreed to by the group. Is that it?*

A: Yes, the group created that.

*Q: Is the information on that is the same as the one your colleague sent me?*

A: That was the same thing, yes.

*Q: Did you find among the women, given their diversity and background and where they were from that there were differences of view?*

A: Very much so. But there is also a strong desire to end the conflict and to build peace in Sudan and have a united Sudan. That is really important to folks.

*Q: What were the most contentious issues?*

A: They differed in terms of the CPA versus the Darfur. In Darfur, there are a lot of contentious issues related to the role of the government in the violence, and the role of the government in disarmament and those kinds of things.

*Q: Among themselves, they were not of the same mind?*

A: No, they were of very different minds. But they believed that it was important to find common ground and to work together. At least they could all very much agree that women had an important perspective and were critical stakeholders and needed to be involved in the process.

*Q: Did they articulate a vision of a united Sudan? There does not seem to be much evidence of that because of the Northern Government; that people are talking about a united Sudan that brings all the different parties together.*

A: Pretty much everyone we have worked with strongly hopes for a united Sudan. Many in the South believe that the South will end up seceding because the government does not really care about the CPA. But the people on the whole really do believe that and want to have a united Sudan.

*Q: Including those in the South?*

A: Yes, that is their desire. They are pretty frustrated with the North, so they do not necessarily think it will happen and are pretty disillusioned and some would say biding their time until they get to have a referendum and vote for secession. That their desire, their belief is that they are Sudanese and that they would like to be part of the whole country. But again that is a very generalized perspective.

*Q: So the expectations that the South will vote for independence: is that still pretty dominant?*

A: That would be my guess. I do not think that they feel that the North has shown them any reason why they should not. I do not think they have gotten any sense of not to. Unity has not been made attractive.

*Q: Is there some area we have not touched on? This has been very useful.*

A: That pretty much covers it.

*Q: One of the topics the Institute of Peace is interested in is what lessons stand out in your mind if you look over your whole experience, both related to the CPA and the implementation and the role of women. What stands out to you as lessons about the things that have been done that are effective and things that should have been done in the beginning or now?*

A: Both in the case of the Darfur negotiations and certainly in the CPA, the issues of women, in particular, but also broader stakeholder participation are very much grafted on at the end. There has not been very clear leadership and vision about how to bring those voices in at the beginning, or an understanding of why that is so critical. From our perspective, evidence of why it is so critical is seen from the fact that you still have so much conflict and so little understanding and so little buy in from broader stakeholders.

You just have to find a way from the very beginning to bring those voices in, and that, women are critical stakeholders in the process. They are the majority of the population. They are up to 80% along with children in the camps for the displaced. They tend to be more willing to compromise and bring in perspectives that are relevant to the broader

communities, to children and to development and things like that. So it is important to go the extra mile from the beginning to find out how you should bring those voices into the process.

*Q: How do you think that could be accomplished?*

A: By the international community mandating percentages into the quotas for the teams. By women advocating very hard to the decision makers in their government and to the international community; and not just in negotiations but in all other stages of the agreement.

*Q: So the outsiders should make sure that the women are represented in everything that they do. Are there other lessons in terms of the whole process; practical things that might have been done or should be done?*

A: In the case of Darfur, one thing that worked or could have worked really well was that Darfurians themselves, created a gender expert support team. So a group of women who transcended tribal, ethnic, regional divisions from Darfur, from all the areas of Darfur, were to work together to articulate women's priorities, and managed to get support from the African Union gender desk and different women's groups. Different governments should go and brief the negotiators and observe the talks and present their priorities to the mediators. They only unfortunately were able to do this at the seventh round, which is the final round of negotiations and were only there for three weeks. But they ultimately were able to engender the Darfur Peace Agreement. For all its other faults, it is a gender sensitive agreement, and they learned from their sisters in the South how to achieve that and to advocate for that and make sure that happened. In everything going forward, those lessons should be remembered, and they should be brought in sooner to that process.

*Q: In the culture of Sudan and the difference between the North and the South, the culture of whether women can be actively outspoken and involved and engaged, is there resistance to that among the...*

A: Yes, that certainly is an issue. Part of it certainly is cultural and part of it is a desire not to share power, to have to give up their power. But the women, even including some very conservative ones from the Islamic background, still strongly believe that they have a voice that needs to be heard. Culture is a dynamic thing, and that they need to be brought in and that men need to recognize they have things to bring and that women need to develop male allies who can speak to that.

*Q: That is your main point on what you believe should be done and recognized.*

A: Yes.

*Q: This has been very helpful. I thank you.*