

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

Interview # 78 – Executive Summary

Interviewed by: W. Haven North
Initial interview date: April 4, 2007
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The interviewee started worked in Sudan June 2005 to September 2006. The first period involved advising the Government of National Unity on the creation of a National Human Rights Commission and with the Ahfad University for Women on gender issues and with a women's led non-profit organization. A second period starting in 2006 included work with a project for increasing the participation of women in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

In Khartoum initially, there was a definite sense of optimism among contacts in the North, who were content to have the fighting stopped. There was some rioting after the death of John Garang and uneasy calm up to September 2006. While not familiar with the details of the CPA, the interviewee was acquainted with the Government of National Unity (GNU), a result of the CPA, its composition and frictions and the proportion of women. The Southern Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) had fair number of women appointed to the (GNU) and the NCP had a smaller group of women appointed.

On the forming of National Human Rights Commission, the interviewee had carried out research on other similar commissions in post-conflict situations. Consultations were organized in workshops with 65-70 people (from the North, South and other regions) on the role of the Commission and issues related to its formation. The main topics related to the process for appointing commissioners, issues they would address and types of resolution and follow up. The main human rights issues related to discrimination against Southerners working in government and physical assaults based on ethnicity,

Work on the role of women and their participation in government started with a workshop of 45 women from across the country, including from Darfur. The main priorities were increasing women's presence on key commissions and the law governing political parties. The results so far include the formation of a loose coalition of women leaders, who initially focused on electoral law to make the law gender sensitive. Follow-up workshops were held in the U.S. to identify priorities and hold joint briefings about training, advocacy and organization. The capabilities of the women are limitless, but limited by their access to technology and information. Their influence is varied. But they are influential especially in the South. It is more difficult to assess their presence within the NCP.

Regarding preparations for the census and elections, there is training in the political parties on the CPA and its implementation. While there is some understanding of the CPA among the women, more needs to be done in the South. At the time of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) negotiations, a gender expert support team were able to gain some inclusion in seventh round and had a great deal of influence on the final wording. (The DPA is one of the most gender sensitive peace agreements ever.) The women of Darfur are united in having women participate, but they are not unified ideologically, politically or regionally. Among the women from the North and South and other regions, there is a sense of solidarity based on the fact they are facing the same challenges. Networks of women can be very powerful, such as the Sudan General Women's Union and the Ahfad University for Women.

The international community has not taken nearly as much initiative as it could on women's participation. The U.S. could do much to encourage more women to be included in implementation of projects, for example. The women need political skill training, proposing and managing projects and in general training and communications.

The interviewee's main interest is the recognition of the capacity of women and the need for them to participate in all levels of CPA implementation.

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Q: To place the interview in context, it would be helpful to have a brief introduction on your association with Sudan and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

A: I started working in Sudan in June of 2005 when I moved there to do two things. I went to Khartoum and I worked in the human rights unit of the UN mission there, UNMIS (UN Mission in Sudan). While I was there I worked on a couple things including a project where that unit was advising the Government of National Unity on the creation of a National Human Rights Commission. The Commission was proposed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. One of the things we did was conduct workshops or consultations with civil society to get input on how the National Human Rights Commission should be formed and what kind of issues it should deal with and what were other models of human rights commissions in post-conflict areas that Sudan might want to look at. That was one thing.

I also worked at Ahfad University for Women, doing a couple of different projects. One at the Gender and Development Center working on our website mainly and gathering information about some of the people that had done sort of academic pieces for them related to the CPA and women's roles in peace building in Sudan. Then I worked with women-led small non-profit organizations to do some documenting of what they did with funds that they had received, and applying for additional grants.

So that was my first introduction to Sudan. Then, when I joined an NGO in September of 2006, they had a Sudan project that had been working with women from Sudan since about 1999. A main area of focus is on increasing women's participation in implementing the CPA. So in November, we convened a group of about 45 women in Khartoum from across Sudan, from different political parties, different regions. We had about a three- to four-day consultation on identifying women's priorities for increasing woman's participation in CPA implementation. So they came up with a set of recommendations. Following that consultation we had several days of meetings and advocacy meetings in which the women participants and we advocated some of the things they came up with. Since then we have been having meetings and advocacy here in Washington and at the UN and in various other organizations, like the World Bank on increasing women's participation and implementing the CPA.

Q: When you started out in 2005 what was the situation vis-à-vis the north/south? Was all your work in the North or the South?

A: I was based in Khartoum. The phase of the project doing consultations with civil society on a National Human Rights Commission, at that point, was only in the North. Subsequently, they had some in the East and in the South, but my work focused only in the North.

Q: How do you characterize the situation then when you started out in terms of...?

A: When I arrived, it was several weeks before John Garang's death. I was in Khartoum at that time. When I first arrived there was a definite sense of optimism. I must qualify this: a fairly limited sample because I had friends and contacts mainly only from the North. So it is hard to say from the South. But, in one sense, a lot of people in the North, especially the people in the area that I lived in, were not affected on the day-to-day level by the conflict. So I do not think their lives were transformed greatly when the peace agreement came into place. But they were content to have it there and happy that the fighting was stopping.

There were a couple of days of rioting afterwards. I did not feel a sense of major resentment between people from the North and the South mainly, because I was surrounded by the majority who were Northerners. So there was not a lot of tension in the area that I lived in. The rioting was fairly contained compared to what it could have been largely in part owing to the FPLM (Family Planning Logistics Management) leadership calling for calm and reacting very quickly. There was an uneasy calm, but not a type of calm that was going to bubble over into anything very serious in the area that I lived. That was the feeling for the rest of the time that I was there which was until September 2006.

Q: You were there at the time of the agreement then?

A: No, 2005, I was there after the signing. When I went back in November of 2006, there were a lot more expectations that had time to develop, and a lot of people from the South were very concerned about the lack of prioritized development that was taking place. They were hoping that some of the results of the CPA would have reached them; the benefits of a peace agreement would have reached them a bit more by that point. But there was still definitely a willingness to work with people from the North.

Q: Did you have any feel for or understanding of the negotiation process for the agreement and the agreement itself?

A: No. I became involved after that was completed.

Q: What was your understanding of the agreement? What were its characteristics or components? It is a very complicated agreement.

A: It was, it was.

Q: There were several protocols: wealth sharing and the security protocols, for example.

A: There were a couple of major issues that in terms of the establishment of commissions, the power sharing, the election timeline, and, of course, the referendum timeline. A lot of people, who I knew and worked with outside of the UN system, understood, were aware mainly of the elections and the referendum components of the CPA. I came to understand a lot more about the power-sharing dynamic and the formation of the Government of National Unity, but when I first moved there especially it was not an in-depth knowledge of the CPA. My sense was that a lot of people, of course, had not read the entire CPA; especially the people from the South were very distrusting of John Garang in terms of saying this was a positive thing that we need to go forward with.

Q: What about the implementation of the CPA, what is your understanding of whether it is being implemented or how it was being implemented?

A: A lot of the implementation was subject to political will, which was not always in place. The implementation was subjective. There were a lot of things that could have been implemented more quickly and in a different way if there had been strong political will to do so on the part of Bashir and his government.

Q: The formation of the Government of National Unity, did you work with it?

A: Yes, and we do... I certainly knew the proportions of seats that were allocated to various parties and I had a fairly good sense of what the composition was, the friction between the members of parliaments, or members of the assembly from the National Congress Party (NCP) and from the Southern Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). I knew that the Umma Party members were not attending the assembly, sort of boycotting, not taking their seats. There were some other parties as well from the south; I understood that the SPLM was not the sole political party in the south.

From another perspective, I knew the proportion of women that were appointed, although it is difficult to get that exact number and to get all their names, but I understood that the SPLM had appointed a fair number of women and that the NCP had as well but it was a smaller number. I really was not sure what influence the assembly would have in terms of CPA implementation versus the center, I guess you can call it.

Q: Did it meet?

A: It met shortly before I arrived the second time and then it is meeting again now but I do not know if it met when I was in Khartoum, which was in 2005.

Q: Did you have contact with the Northern government?

A: No, no I did not. I do not think I knew anyone in the government itself.

Q: Did you have some sense of what kind of a government it was?

A: Absolutely, I worked in the human rights area.

Q: You said you had a number of workshops in the first round and what were those about and what were the issues?

A: There was just the one that took place when I was there and then there were provisions made to have subsequent ones. The issue was, per the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and per the United Nations arrangement with the Government of National Unity of Sudan as well; the United Nations Mission was to advise the government on creating a National Human Rights Commission.

I had done some research on some other human rights commissions in post-conflict areas and we also wanted to have consultations with members of civil society. So we had about 65 -70 people, at a meeting in Khartoum at which we had about four or five people speak about what a human rights commission can do and what some of the major issues surrounding its formation are. There was a discussion and the people provided input.

Q: Where were most of these people from?

A: The majority of them were living in Khartoum. Some of them were academics; there were a number of people from various universities including Ahfad University for Women. Some of them lead very small NGOs (non-governmental organizations) like human rights related NGOs, legal aid type providers. Some of them were bureaucrats in the government.

Q: The Northern government?

A: Yes

Q: Anybody from the Southern government?

A: There were people from the South but no one from the Southern Government that I recall.

Q: Was there anybody from the other regions?

A: There were a couple people from the east who were there but living in Khartoum at the time.

Q: What were the main issues you were addressing?

A: A lot of the contentions surrounded who would appoint commissioners, what the process for appointing commissioners would be and what an ideal mix of commissioners would look like, what type of issues the commissioner would be mandated to deal with, what type of cases could be brought forward to it and then what type of resolution or follow-up it is to have.

Q: There must have been some sensitive discussion about the human rights issues?

A: There was a discussion of what it could include.

Q: Did they address women's issues or other procedural issues about rights?

A: There were women who spoke and wanted to make sure that women were on the commission, that there were women commissioners. Beyond that that was all of the discussion that I remember on gender specifically. Parts of it also took place in Arabic and so there certainly could have been discussions that passed me by.

Q: Was there a good reception by the Northern government or the Southern government?

A: It is hard to say actually because the reports were compiled and then presented after I had left so I do not know what the reaction was. They were favorable to UNMIS continuing to do these consultations.

Q: When you said that you had a number of workshops; were there other subjects...?

A: While I was there it was just this one and then the same workshop was replicated in other parts of the country after I left to make sure that there had been input.

Q: They were mainly to inform people about this?

A: It was the same thing to get input on...so UNMIS could say to the government this is what a number of people in Sudan feel about the creation of a human rights commission. So they wanted to make sure that they had a more representative view.

Q: What was your understanding of the human rights issues?

A: There were many human rights issues that you can imagine that are present in Sudan.

Q: What were the ones that stood out in people's minds?

A: A lot of issues of discrimination against people from the South, who wanted to work in government. What was legally allowed and what could the government do and not do in terms of excluding people from the South in civil service positions And all the way up to and including actual physical assaults based on ethnicity and region of origin.

Q: What was the forum for what you were doing and what was the substance of what you were doing?

A: I started off by doing a workshop with a group of about 45 women from all across the country including members of the assembly to identify what women from various parties and various regions thought were priority areas for women's participation in governments and in CPA and for their participation to be increased. So we had a process by which they formed and articulated what their priorities were and then it proceeded to be my job to help them communicate those priorities to people that they may not otherwise have access to like donors and members of the international community like UNMIS and the World Bank. Certain priorities came up.

Q: What were some of them that stood out in your mind?

A: A couple major ones were increasing women's presence on key commissions like the land commission and the civil service commission to make sure that women were actually represented in larger numbers on those commissions themselves, because they felt that was the key to dealing with the gender perspective of those issues. They also were very interested in the law governing political parties that was being drafted at the time on increasing the focus on encouraging women's participation in the up-coming elections. These were the major ones.

Q: Did this include people from say the Darfur region?

A: It did. At that point we had just had one person from Darfur, who was at the time living in Khartoum.

Q: What has resulted from this work so far?

A: We have number areas to follow up. One is the formation of a coalition. A loose coalition of women leaders from throughout Sudan who have continued to meet and stay in touch. They did decide to focus on the electoral law and so they invited members of the electoral commission to come and make a presentation to them and then the women drafted input in the electoral law. So they submitted in writing input that they felt would make the draft electoral law gender-sensitize. This was a diverse group of NCP/SPLM and Umma Party members getting together to do this. One result was that they spoke with one voice.

We have also had, in January of this year, a delegation of six women come from Sudan, three from Darfur, two from the North and one from the South. They also did similar exercises identifying what their joint priorities were and articulating those and advocating for them. They have continued to work at the coalitions since then too. They have done things like briefing members of the Sudanese General Women's Union and other women's organizations. So you have a member of the NCP and a member of the Umma Party and someone from Darfur who is a civil society representative in Darfur. They have been active in holding joint briefings and joint information sharing sessions with groups

of women where they talk about what kind of training they have received and what kind of advocacy they think needs to be done and how women can organize themselves.

Q: How do you characterize the capabilities of these women and their education?

A: Their capabilities are limitless. A lot of the women that we work with are extremely articulate and politically sensitive and aware of what is going on and engaged and very, very capable advocates. So, by all means, they are as equal as any other group of women.

A lot of them are limited by their access to technology and information. For a lot of people, especially in the South, it is very difficult to just stay in touch, to have reliable email access on which some of this information is shared. It is difficult to have a sense of what entry points there are for them in the process, but that does not speak to their inherent capacity to contribute.

Q: How do you sense their influence or the acceptance of their advocacy efforts?

A: It varies widely. They all have very different styles of advocacy. Some are more advocates from the outside you could say; some are more into calling the government to account type advocates. Some are members of their political parties in which they advocate for change in women's inclusion among other women and male members of their party. So it varies widely. Some of them have quite a bit of influence within their parties. I would say particularly women in the South have had a fair amount of influence that I can measure, or that I can see in terms of getting their colleagues to acknowledge the importance of appointing more women, more than women in the North.

Q: Was their advocacy mostly related to women's issues or did they get into the larger issues of CPA?

A: Our perspective and theirs too is that there is no such thing really as women's issues. Each issue has various parts that have gender considerations in them. For example, one of the things that they advocated strongly for is women's involvement in the petroleum commission and the civil service commission, to make sure that women are not thought of as only able to deal with women and children or sexual violence issues, but that they do have a role to play in the economic commissions. So they have been very vocal about trying to assert themselves into a whole sort of range of other issues.

One of the people we work with is Anne Itto, Minister of Agriculture who is from the South. She is very adamant about gender considerations in agriculture, that it is not a woman's issue or a man's issue. So part of their struggle is the perception of those that they work with to help them realize that they are in fact capable of serving on these key commissions and key committees within the assembly.

Q: Do you think they are influential?

A: Yes, I do actually, I really do. They have a voice within their caucuses, again particularly in the South. It is just very difficult to say within the North, within the NCP. In the Umma Party certainly they do. We work a lot with Mary Al Mahdi who is the daughter of Sidig Al Mahdi and the spokesperson for the Umma Party. I know that she has a great deal of influence in her party.

Q: There is supposed to be a census and then an election and referendum. Have they taken any roles on these?

A: A lot of their advocacy is on advocating within their own party and within the electoral commission to help lay the groundwork to make sure that women are included in election preparations, because, for the most part, the women that we work with want to see women candidates. Especially a lot of the members of the national assembly, they are going to have to run for their seats and a lot of them are concerned about that. Knowing that they are going to have to face an election, they are very adamant that they need to start preparing now. A lot of people understand that this is a major concern related to the elections. A lot of women are concerned the counting might not be handled correctly and so that women will not be able to vote in the proportion that they should be able to.

Q: Is there any evidence that a census is being taken?

A: There is a census unit at UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) that is working with the government to coordinate it, but I do not know what practical steps are being taken right now. I am very concerned that it has not advanced more than it has.

Q: On the election, are you aware of any preparations made?

A: There are a number of political parties—I know this through the women that we work with because they are the ones that are meeting with them—they are training women members of their parties. So they are conducting sessions with them; the sessions to begin with: what is the CPA? Under the CPA this is what is going to happen, this is what is called for under the CPA, and so this is where we can play a roll in CPA implementation and a big part of that is the elections. So yes, a lot of the women are doing that kind of preparation.

Q: Do they have a pretty good understanding of the CPA?

A: Some of them do; it's hard to say. Some of the women we work with are very elite women who definitely have a strong understanding of the CPA and have been working with it and through it for a long time. Particularly, civil society women from the South have less understanding of the CPA and the women that we work with are civil society leaders so they have a fair understanding. A lot of what they are telling us is that there needs to be programs of awareness-raising above the CPA in the South, because a lot of people do not understand what its major components are and how it is meant to...how they are included in different parts of it. There is a lot of lack of awareness.

Q: How are these women's groups related to issues like Darfur or the eastern rebel groups? Are they getting involved in them?

A: Yes, we work with various women who are from Darfur who have formed, I do not know if you have heard of the gender experts support team...

Q: No.

A: It is a group of women who came together to participate in the formal negotiation surrounding the Darfur Peace Agreement. So they had to elbow their way in to the seventh round of negotiations in Abuja, which is where the actual Darfur Peace Agreement was signed. They had a great deal of influence over the final wording of the document. The lack of support left it not politically sustained by a number of groups. But they were responsible for the Darfur Peace Agreement being one of the most gender sensitive peace agreements that there has ever been.

Q: Was it mainly on gender issues?

A: They took the whole range of issues and incorporated gender considerations into making sure women IDPs (internally displaced persons) were included. We work with women who are doing that. When we were there in November we had a group of two things. We worked with women from Darfur living in Khartoum who really want to continue to be active in things like the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission and also the ongoing rounds of negotiations. We advocate for women's inclusion in formal negotiations. An interesting thing was the interaction between the women from the North and the South with women from Darfur. From what I could see from the women that we worked with, they genuinely wanted the conflict in Darfur to be resolved and were generally supportive beyond anything of women's inclusion in conflict resolution. So they were supportive of women in Darfur participating in a resolution of the conflict in Darfur.

Q: Darfur always has had many factions and divisions.

A: Yes, oh absolutely.

Q: Do the women represent a unifying group?

A: No, they are unified in their desire to have women participate, but they are not a unified ideologically or politically or regionally unified group.

Q: Do you have any connection with the eastern rebels?

A: No, I do not unfortunately.

Q: What do you hear from these women from your conversations about a sense of vision of what the Sudan should be?

A: Oh, a lot of the women from the South who are in government are committed making this Government of National Unity work. A lot of people that we speak to, who are not in the government, are biding time until the referendum and are fairly certain that the referendum will result in the South seceding. There is a large sense that people will wait out the time and see what happens, but they know that they have that card to play, if it comes to that. In the North, it is harder to say.

Q: So you do not feel the women's group is looking at the situation with a countrywide perspective?

A: They do, in the sense that they very genuinely feel connected to the experiences of women both in the North and the South. They feel connected as women as well as a Sudanese people. I get a sense of it especially after the couple days after we worked. There is always hesitation at the beginning, but there were the seeds of some sort of solidarity that were planted and that do exist between women in the North and women in the South and women in Darfur where women feel unified. Of course, they all have first and foremost their political alliances and regional alliances, but maybe more so than others, they have a sense that Sudan as a whole has issues that they can address together and that they have a sense of solidarity based on the fact that they are facing the same challenges of having their voices heard as women.

Q: How would you assess the international support for the peace process and particularly for the women's groups?

A: The international community has not taken nearly as much initiative as it could in terms of encouraging women's participation. They have really missed a lot of opportunities to involve and consult with women and women leaders. A lot of times women's participation is written off as cultural constraints, but that is completely invalid. There could be a lot more advocacies by international community when working with the Government of National Unity. There are certain countries that really stand out as doing really good work with respect to gender such as the Dutch and the Norwegians. Generally, people understand that women need to be involved, but there are few countries that really believe that it is critical to the success of the CPA and the future of the country to have women very substantially involved in implementing the CPA.

Q: What about the U.S. role?

A: The U.S. obviously played a big role in bringing about the CPA.

Q: What is the role now broadly or specifically?

A: There is a lot that the U.S. could do in terms of including or encouraging more women to be included. For example, when they distribute funding for reconstruction projects in the South, there are a lot of women-led organizations that could implement projects, but they need to be identified and then approached. They could do a lot better job of that. The U.S. is not doing much at all to advocate for the inclusion of women in

the Darfur peace agreement negotiations. They will take it if it is there, but they are not being vocal advocates for it, which is a big oversight.

Q: What about the NGO community or are you including them in your observations?

A: You know it really varies. There are some NGOs that are great advocates for the inclusion of women. One problem is that a lot of NGOs and donor governments view women as victims and as recipients of protection. They say women have an important role to play in reconstruction, but very few of them understand that women also have a role to play in government itself. So they counsel women as beneficiaries of their investments and their projects, but not necessarily as administrators of them or of women that need political training and capacity building to be part of the reconstruction.

Q: What are the specific needs or systems that could be helpful to advancing the women's movement?

A: For one thing, political skill training. So helping women first of all understand what is going to happen with the elections. Also basic training in terms of what needs to happen for them to run in an election. What kind of support do they need to get and what kind of organizing they need to do and how to organize their own constituencies and supporters: doing targeted political training for women.

Another is making a concerted effort to identify a group that could be implementers of some of the projects that are being funded by the U.S. government, for example; making the application process to obtain those funds successful.

Q: What kind of projects?

A: There are a ton of them in the South, for example, human rights education and a PPA (Partnership Program Agreement) education program. The U.S. is funding some of those and a lot of the women do not know how to access that funding. So there is a need to work with women to help them figure out how to write proposals and get access to some of this money that they do not know exists in the first place. A lot of that involves using radios as a form of dissemination or identifying local women leaders and using their networks to get the word out. Just understanding the different constraints that women are facing; there are enormous levels of illiteracy in the South, in particular among women. So making a process that is more accommodating to women who have faced those conditions for a very long time.

Q: What kind of reforms specifically would help; we talked about training but anything else?

A: Training is a big one.

Q: What about in the communications area, I gather there is difficulty in communicating among themselves?

A: Yes, to some degree. A lot of the communications among the women are done by cell phones and through fliers and that sort of thing or meetings that they have. I do not know what basic support is for that kind of thing; women would figure out how to use it. A lot of the support does not have to be monetary. The World Bank, for example, could indicate that it wants a certain proportion of its projects to be implemented by women and it is up to the Government of Sudan to have that happen, but it takes a bit of will on the part of donors to make that happen.

Q: Do you sense a movement of women's groups coming together in a national perspective?

A: There is a loose coalition that we helped bring about. That is one group that is definitely moving and shaking on the scene in Khartoum. Then, there is this group of gender experts support team which is this group of women from Darfur and that is definitely an interesting story of women coming together and having a concrete impact on the local process. There are also sort of networks of women in Sudan. There is the Sudan General Women's Union, which has tens of thousands of members throughout Sudan. They have a very effective network based on formal communications where they have, I do not think that they call them chapters, sub-units of organizations through which they disseminate information. They can be a very powerful group. There is also the Ahfad University for Women, which is the university that admits only women and has a gender focus. Ahfad University brings together a lot of women from the south and the east and Darfur as well. That is kind of a neat generation that there...

Q: Is there a comprehensive listing of all these groups?

A: No, I do not think there is, because we have had trouble identifying them over a long period of time.

Q: But in terms of facilitating communication among them and with them, something like that might...

A: Yes, it would be helpful; it is very difficult. It is often very political; they are not immune to political influence.

Q: What are your next efforts?

A: We are continuing to work with this coalition of women and trying to help them get some of the support for the political work that they are doing, political training that they want to do. We are also working with members of the national assembly from the SPLM and the NCP to help them build their capacity as women parliamentarians, to help them get the training or information that they need to be advocates within the national assembly. That is the major area of work for us.

Q: Will you be going back to the Sudan?

A: I am not sure when, but I hope at some point soon.

Q: Is there anything that we have not touched on in your work?

A: Yes. What I would love to have come through in this report is the largely unacknowledged capacity of women and the need for women to participate in all levels of CPA implementation more than as just sheer recipients of assistance. There are a lot of women that have a capacity to create a more viable peace and a more lasting peace. It is clear that they need support from the outside to do so. The more donors and NGOs can advocate for them and to be there when they have meetings and when programs are developed make sure that they are consulted on how to implement them. That deserves a lot more attention.

Q: Are there any efforts to get the international community and the NGOs to develop a common view of what needs to be done for increasing the role of women?

A: That is part of what we do, but we are not doing it by a building a coalition type approach. We are doing it more in a more one-on-one sense and that is why the women that we work with have come up with this written set of priorities and so they can give them physically to people that they meet with and embassies there and tell them that these are the things that they want to focus on and hope that that...

Q: But there is an effort to get the various governments or maybe the NGOs to have a coordinated approach for...?

A: There is a woman from the Dutch government in Khartoum, who has created a working group of other embassies who have an interest in women's leadership, but I am not sure what stage that is at.

Q: Right, but otherwise is it worth pursuing?

A: It is hard to say because they all have such varied... it is worth pursuing, but I am wondering if it is realistic to get people to have their acts together to that extent. It might be a hard thing to do but it could be useful. Anytime you have more voices speaking on one issue that's great. So yes, definitely increase awareness.

Q: Before we wind up, part of this exercise relates to getting some lessons learned from experience. Are there are some things that stand out in your mind that should have been done or should be doing differently? What stands out on you mind?

A: Over arching pieces and decision-making bodies that include women; everything from a commission to just a contemplative group that looks at what programs should be funded in Sudan.

Q: That is not being done?

A: No, not nearly to the extent that it should be.