

SUDANESE ORGANISATION FOR NONVIOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT (SONAD)



European Commission

Report of the conclusion workshop and the project entitled “Urban Communities in the Capitals” Dialogue on Referendum implemented by SONAD in collaboration with the Concordis International and with funds from the European Commission (EC), Sudan



Participants of the conclusion WS held in Kht, November, 2010



Part of the Press Conference

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Introduction

The African proverb goes *“If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem”*. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 has called among others holding of the referendum for the people of Southern Sudan to choose between unity or secession. This exercise has huge implications on the Sudanese people especially the South Sudanese and North Sudanese residing in the Urban Capitals of Khartoum and Juba. It was from this background that Sudanese Organization for Nonviolence and Development (SONAD) in collaboration with Concordis International has organized four workshops (two in Juba and two in Khartoum) to carry out Community Dialogue on referendum. The total of 100 participants took part in the workshops representing; Youth, Women, Traders, Farmers, Pastoralists, Returnees, Chiefs and Religious leaders from the minority Communities.

Conclusion workshop held in Khartoum

Twenty participants were invited in Khartoum for a 2-day conclusion workshop held 9-10th November, 2010 with participation of 10 participants from Juba. The workshop was convened at Falcon Hotel, Beledya street in Khartoum. Participants during the two days reviewed and discussed in depth the recommendations put forward by participants in the four workshops on challenges and fears identified about the referendum, how they want the CPA partners to discuss issues that will have impact on their lives and measures that they would like to take to manage potential conflicts associated with the referendum.

Participants after lengthy discussions agreed on the following list of recommendations to CPA partners to prevent potential conflicts and manage post referendum challenges;

- Maintain commitment and redouble efforts to conduct the referendum on time and fully implement the remaining unimplemented parts in CPA especially formation of Abyei Referendum Commission, border demarcation, conduct of popular consultation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. Participants further expressed concern that continuous dialogue between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) should be the only way to address implementation challenges of the CPA.
- Allow the Minority groups to enjoy dual citizenship and maintain the current citizenship status of the Southern Sudanese in the North and the Northern Sudanese in the South for at least two years in case the referendum result favors secession. This will reduce fear of uncertainty in minority groups and control tension, lost of properties and lives
- Control movement of troops in the border Areas and provocative media statements as both of these scare citizens and could trigger violence not only in border areas but also in Urban Capitals of Khartoum and Juba. Participants further expressed fear that any mistreatment to South Sudanese in Khartoum will negatively impact the lives of Northern Sudanese residing in Juba and vice versa.
- Ensure rule of law on whoever violates the conduct of peaceful referendum. Participants noticed with great dismay that whenever, violent incidents are committed by individuals or groups in the South or North, authorities always blame un-seen hands and the criminals are either detained without trial and later freed or are not arrested and tried. This raises doubts as laws are not taking its cause.
- Respect and accept the choice of the Southern Sudanese as will be clear in the referendum results and work to reconcile the Sudanese people in light of the referendum result. Participants reached

conclusion that the right of self determination is a group right and internationally recognized as stipulated in CPA. Parties to CPA, the Sudanese and the international Community should respect its outcome be it secession or unity. It was also emphasized that referendum should not be seen as a dividing factor to create hatred between Southern and Northern Sudanese, but rather be seen as a democratic exercise. In case of secession, the Government of South and North Sudan should maintain good neighborhood relations and encourage free movement of people between the South and the North.

Recommendation to the International Community

- Participants discussed with great concern the experience of the April 2010 general elections where most of the funding agencies and donors released calls for proposal and funds lately which impacted negatively in carrying out civic and voter education. Participants therefore, recommended that the international community should financially and technically support civil society organizations, Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) to fully carry out their duties and roles within the given limited time bond.
- Observe the referendum processes as international observers. Participants call on European Commission, African Union, Arab league and other international recognized bodies to observe the referendum process as it will give more credibility to the process and promote peaceful acceptance of its result.

Recommendation to Civil society and Community based Organizations

- Civil society organizations have great responsibility to promote peace and justice in the community. Therefore, it was recommended that community leaders from both the South and the North residing in Khartoum and Juba should play a role module to create awareness about civic and voter education and encourage inter-communal dialogue to contribute towards a peaceful referendum period.
- Adapt and promote nonviolence as the best way to respond to challenges related to the referendum and abstain from any form of violence.

South Sudan Referendum Commission and Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRC & SSRB)

- It was noticed with great concern that rules and procedures are not released by the South Sudan Referendum Commission, participants therefore, recommend immediate release and disseminate of rules and procedures and voter information to allow massive civic and voter education.
- Facilitate credential process for the domestic and international observers as it will provide credibility and transparency and contribute to peaceful acceptance of the referendum results.
- Update the public about the referendum processes. Participants commented in length that silence increases suspicion and doubts which may lead to situation where people will begin to depend on rumours. Therefore, its important that the South Sudan Referendum Commission and the South Sudan Referendum Bureau update the public frequently to ensure transparency of the process.

Press Conference Convened

A press conference was organized on 11th November 2010 to disseminate the outcome of the conclusion workshop. Several media houses including Al gezero Television, Al Arabia Egptian Television, Alshrug Television, Khartoum Monitor, Citizen, Ajas Alhuria and Alayam News papers were present. The press conference was also attended by representatives of the political parties as well as local and international NGOs staff. Among representatives of the political parties was Mr. Simon Atem the Secretary of Culture in the Sudan People's Liberation Movemnet (SPLM) and NCP although invited officially could not send a representative. Ms. Neha Erasmus of the African Union High Penal for the Implementation, Ms. Julia Kremer Peace Adviser of the Civil Peace Service of the German Development Service (DED), Mr. Abdul Azim Mohamed of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and many leaders of the local and community based organizations were among representatives from NGOs and the Government bodies.

The penal comprised of Mr. Moses Monday Director of SONAD, Lucian Harriman, Country Director of the Concordis International and Susan Ahmed Elwakeel SONAD's Volunteer as a moderator. Over one hundred copies of the press release was disseminated, SONAD brochure and contact details shared. Algezero TV, Alshrug TV and Al Arabia reported the event and so are Citizen News papers and Al ayam Newspaper. As a result discussion of the status of citizenship increased on daily News papers in Khartoum. SONAD was interviewed two times with South Sudan Television, three times with Radio Miraya FM in Juba and Khartoum to reflect and comment on the outcome of Urban Community Dialogue on referendum. SONAD has received number of e-mails from local and international partners commenting the role played in bringing South Sudanese and North Sudanese into a dialogue over the issues of referendum and how both Communities can play proactive role in mitigating violence and promote peaceful referendum. SONAD has received e-mails from the former General Secretary of the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation, Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in England, War Resisters International and others.

Reactions and questions raised by Journalists and others

The most crucial questions asked by journalists and those present included; the status of Abyei Referendum and its impact on South Sudan referendum, rumours that troops from both South and North Sudan coming closer in the South-North Border, why Southern Sudanese in Khartoum sell their properties and want to return to the South, can Sudan avoid war in 2011, Financial and logistical constraints facing South Sudan Referendum Commission and what happens if the SPLM and NCP fail to find satisfactory solutions to challenges of post referendum issues including oil sharing, Nile water, Debts and national assets, citizenship, currency and others.

Answers were provided to every question and partners to CPA were encouraged to continue discussion on post referendum issues.

Positive experiences

- The press release issued by SONAD at the end of the project was widely disseminated and reported on local Newspapers, e-mail groups and web sites as a result SONAD received number of comments from members of the international fellowship of reconciliation, Protection international, Human rights watch and SONAD was asked by Radio Miraya FM for interviews to explain its nonviolent approach to mitigating conflicts associated with referendum with focus on the urban communities workshops organized in Juba and Khartoum.
- The project increased SONAD's cooperation and networking with many local and international partners including Ministry of Peace and CPA implementation in Juba and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Department of Local NGOs in Khartoum, Civil Peace Service of the German Development Service, The United Nations Advanced Mission in Sudan Miraya FM Radio and other local and international peace stakeholders participated in the workshops including Sudanese Network for Democratic Elections (SuNDE), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) ad the South Sudan Referendum Commision and Bureau .

- Participants from the South and North Sudan were able to meet and inter-act leading to understanding of different perspectives as civil society actors in the Country. A participant from Juba in the conclusion workshop held in Khartoum commented that “this project has enable me to come to see Khartoum but also meet the Northern Sudanese people whom I use to hate for killing my own close relatives during the time of civil war. Now he said and I quote even if I voted for secession in the coming referendum, I know I have friends in the North not enemies”.

Challenges

- Getting permit for the press conference as well as venue for the conclusion workshop was problematic but this challenge was overcome with intervention of the administration of local NGOs in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs a department that knows the work of SONAD.
- In Southern Sudan, most civic and voter education activities on referendum targeted South Sudanese unlike this project which targeted both South and North Sudanese. Although it was unique and very much appreciated by many local and international peace stakeholders, yet it has lead to mis-conception that SONAD may want to make unity attractive especially on grounds that SONAD operates in Khartoum and Juba and the controversy over its logo (although not the same with the symbol for unity). However, the media coverage of the project with participation of high ranking authorities in the Ministry of Peace and CPA Implementation, reduced misconception to minimum.
- Although SONAD is always sensitive in terms of gender, ethnic and religious representation in its all activities, yet few number of North Sudanese turned out for the first workshop organized in Juba as most of the invitees were traders who later apologized for being committed in running their business despite their prior acceptance to participate in the workshop. SONAD later learnt that participants from North felt referendum is a political sensitive issue that many northern Sudanese especially traders feel they may be trapped or mis-understood while expressing themselves in the workshop that would impact negatively on their business therefore, most of them choose not to participate.

Lessons learnt

- SONAD learnt that referendum related activities can not be organized without prior permit from the Security and other relevant authorities.
- Activities that require permit from governmental authorities require much time for preparation
- Involving key relevant actors in the government in crucial activities such as the Urban Communities Dialogue on referendum is very crucial and sends a strong message that the activity is approved by the authorities and can be trusted politically.

Evaluation and Recommendations

Participants in all the trainings expressed appreciation for the uniqueness of the project and workshop approach. Facilitators were also praised for maintaining impartiality in the issue and the rewarding topics covered. Participants felt empowered and promised to contribute in solving and mitigating conflicts nonviolently in the context of the referendum and expressed need for the continuation of similar workshops with focus on minority rights after the referendum. Participants in Khartoum recommended that the conclusion workshop should have been conducted in Juba instead. SONAD and Concordis International was asked to lobby and advocate for the rights of the minority groups in both Khartoum and Juba and work to empower them through peacebuilding, reconciliation and human Rights Education.

Conclusion

In conclusion SONAD wishes to extend its gratitude to the administration of the Concordis International

and through them to the European Commission for the financial and technical support without which this project would have not taken place. Its our sincere wish that Concordis International will continue to support sustain peace and democratic processes in Sudan beyond referendum and post CPA Sudan.