

Developmental transformation and peace consolidation in southern Sudan

by Jeni Klugman and Emily Gosse Kallaur

Building the capacity of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) is the latest challenge in the transformation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) from rebel movement to governing partner.

Recognising the need to establish an administrative arm to govern the territory over which it had gained control, the SPLM set up the Civil Authority for the New Sudan (CANS) as early as 1996. While CANS has performed some typical government functions, the staff have not been paid regular salaries or given formal contracts of employment. Some are funded out of specific donor projects, while others have been supported by NGOs and, in some cases, by communities. Their lack of resources and equipment has meant that provision of public goods has been minimal. To date, much of southern Sudan's limited basic services has been provided by the UN-led Operation Lifeline Sudan, by externally-funded NGOs operating independently of the CANS and by groups of local citizens.

During the conflict, southern Sudan's economy languished under incredibly difficult constraints. In addition to basic insecurity and food shortages, there are no paved roads outside the major towns. Laying of land mines along key transit routes has left communities isolated and unable to market their goods. Bridges have collapsed and traditional trade links with neighbouring countries disrupted. In a region where per capita income is less than \$100, and access to basic social services amongst the lowest in the world, people's expectations for a tangible peace dividend are high. However, there is a need to move to capitalise on the window of opportunity to maximise the achievement of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and put the region on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The peace requires that the SPLM evolve from a liberation movement into a political organisation capable of leadership in a competitive and democratic context. It has to demonstrate that it can prepare for national elections and form legislative structures. Thus far, reforms necessitated by the CPA are behind schedule due to a range of factors, some related to capacity, others due to differences with the government in the North, with the situation made significantly more challenging with the death of First Vice-President, Dr John Garang de Mabior. Already in July 2005, the International Crisis Group report had challenged the SPLM to make good its promises to empower nascent civil institutions and noted that its lack of inclusiveness and transparent decision making had persisted.¹ ICG called on the GoSS to establish an anti-corruption commission (as planned), develop a code of conduct for officials and stop making deals with oil companies in violation of the spirit of the CPA.

While the SPLM has the political will to implement the CPA it is stymied by chronic lack of institutional capacity and structures, a grave danger at a time when unprecedented resources are poised to flow into its coffers. The SPLM has been operating on a budget of about \$10,000 per month but is expected to soon have a monthly budget in the tens of millions. While resources of this entirely different order of magnitude can be used to jumpstart development, effective utilisation of these resources means that development of a skilled and accountable public administration is a foremost priority. Without a cadre of people equipped to manage resources there are dangers of

cronyism or even return to conflict. In recognition of these risks, the SPLM worked with the Joint Assessment Mission to produce a timeline for step-by-step implementation of reforms and programmes. Development of monitoring and evaluation capacity and structures must be a priority.

Challenges ahead

In the SPLM-controlled South, the average citizen has had a mere year of schooling, in a context where only 7% of teachers have had formal training. The GoSS must rapidly staff its civil service yet many skilled workers are located in 'garrison towns' (those which remained under northern control during the civil war) and the return of skilled southerners from the North and the diaspora is far from assured.

An effective administration requires not only such physical infrastructure as office buildings and IT systems but, even more importantly, systems that put in place basic standards for recruitment of staff, procurement of goods and services, and management and auditing of public resources. Technical assistance to help meet these needs is planned and urgently required.

Decentralisation is a further challenge for a formerly top-down movement. The CPA envisions empowerment of regional and local administrations, many of which currently lack any capacity or resources. The GoSS is faced with difficult choices with respect to the roles and relative size of the centre and local governments and the nature of inter-governmental financial transfers.

Southern Sudan has vast forest and mineral resources, great potential in livestock and forestry and almost 50 million hectares of prime agricultural land but economic activity remains at a subsistence level. It

is estimated that less than 1% of land with agricultural potential is under cultivation, while at the same time food insecurity is chronic and widespread. Not only must the GoSS stimulate the southern economy by providing transport and other infrastructure to develop market towns but it needs to develop policies and regulations to attract private investment locally and from abroad, and to sustainably manage environmental resources.

Formal private sector capacity remains weak, making it likely that in the initial phases of the post-conflict era the GoSS will not have a strong domestic counterpart. International post-conflict experience shows that distortions can arise from a concentration of large numbers of civilian and military personnel who create economic enclaves in terms of

demand for goods and services. However, opportunities do exist, especially in view of the likelihood of a surge in construction and service activity. The GoSS needs to facilitate the growth of an effective and reliable commercial banking sector and to enable Sudanese businesses to access information about new opportunities.

At the local level, economic and service delivery challenges will be compounded by the huge expected influx of IDPs and refugees. Many will return to communities where informal mechanisms for coping with shocks have been exhausted, where access to safe water is limited, and where land has been tilled for years by those who remained behind. This will put pressure on mechanisms to resolve conflicts and heightens the urgency of reviewing customary laws and practices to integrate them into a judicial system that can simultaneously respect international human rights principles (particularly with respect to women) and recognise southern Sudan's rich traditions and diversity.

Fair and predictable legal and judicial structures and professional law enforcement agencies need to be developed. Currently policing is mostly carried out by former soldiers not trained in civilian law enforcement. A related challenge is the transformation of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) from a guerrilla liberation army into a professional standing army as a component of Sudan's National Armed Forces.

Starting a new chapter

The successful signing of the CPA has brought Sudan to the cusp of a new chapter of its history, and the critical task for the Government of National Unity and the GoSS will be to lift the country into peace, security and sustainable development.

Accountability and transparency will be key. Southern Sudan's emerging civil society, assisted by the development of a vibrant independent media, will have a role in holding the GoSS to account and promoting reconciliation. The international community also has a responsibility to provide financial support to follow up on its commitments at the Oslo donors' conference and to help monitor the adherence of the GoSS, and the National Government, to its commitments. At the same time, donors must shift from providing crisis-focused humanitarian assistance to a modern partnership that recognises the importance of country ownership and works to reduce the burdens on the GoSS by harmonising reporting requirements, working as far as possible through such mechanisms as the Multi-Donor Trust Fund which pool resources. For the GoSS, creating positive results on the ground will largely depend on mobilising capacity, with the assistance of domestic and international partners, to tackle daunting institutional and economic challenges.

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1. www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/af-rica/horn_of_africa/096_the_khartoum_splm_agreement_sudan_uncertain_peace.pdf See also pp25-27.

Sudanese women work to clear mines south of Yei.

