

Standing up for the JAM partnerships

by Jeni Klugman and Maude Svensson

Sudan is a nation with enormous potential but where the poverty and living standards of many of the people are among the worst in the world. The level of public services and investment has been eroded over the decades of war and conflict. Neither public nor private investments have reached poor and marginalised areas of the country, fuelling conflict and further impoverishment.

The JAM process resulted in substantial commitments from senior policy makers to invest in human development and poverty eradication, especially in marginalised areas of Sudan. Ambitious but credible targets were set – including access to drinking water, girls in school, credit for small farmers and land mine removal. Successful development in the Sudan will have to be based on partnerships – most importantly, as Michael Kevane points out in the preceding article, those of the Sudanese people themselves – but solidly supported by well-functioning public sectors and by the international community.

The JAM vision rests on the notion of the importance of an efficient, accountable public sector. Mr Kevane may not like it but this is now recognised by development practitioners and such major agencies as the World Bank as critical to sustainable development. It is not misplaced thinking but based on lessons learned from decades of experience of failed development. The role of the state in providing public goods is arguably even more critical in a post-conflict setting – in which needs are many, social capital is eroded and the risk of a return to conflict is high. Robust and flexible institutional solutions are needed as creating ad hoc aid delivery mechanisms leaves the country no better equipped to handle future challenges and perpetuates dependency on international assistance. Public spending is no panacea but neither can private investment solve everything.

Prioritising needs is always a challenge. The UN has an extensive list of immediate needs for which financing is sought on an annual basis. However, the final JAM report focused on the long term and what is needed to meet the aspirations of the Sudanese in terms of rural development, education, health and water by building sustainable structures. Sudan will not be able to emulate the progress that nations like Tanzania or Mozambique are making towards the Millennium Development Goals as long as it lacks effective structures needed for modern development.

Making monetary tradeoffs among a host of competing priorities is, of course, always difficult and arouses controversy. Critics should note that the JAM budgeting process was comprehensive, used a bottom-up approach, employed well-researched costing methods and was based on 15 months of continuous dialogue between Sudanese partners and international experts. To clarify details on how much funding was allocated to a particular activity or sector within the eight Cluster teams and 20 JAM sub-sectors requires analysis of all the three Volumes, including the Result Matrices. Many areas of interest – like gender and conflict prevention – run across the Clusters, sub-sectors and geographical areas.

Those interested in analysing the JAM materials – all of which are online¹ – would find:

- There is a substantial allocation – equivalent to \$20 per person pa directly to local authorities in the South to meet local community needs. The vision of decentralisation enshrined in the CPA and the community-driven recovery approach emphasised in the JAM aim to permanently shift the locus of decision making.
- Restoring and strengthening justice and rule of law are prioritised. Such activities are set

out in Clusters 1, 2, and 7 and entail allocation of about 8-10% of total JAM funds. This indicates the importance attached to them as many of these activities are normally ‘software’ (capacity building, awareness raising, sensitisation etc) and thus considerably cheaper than such ‘hardware’ support as construction of roads and railways.

- There are major programmes to support women and girls throughout the report, including proposals for scholarships for every schoolgirl in southern Sudan. Within the judiciary, special funds are allocated for gender equity.
- The allocation for the Central Bank is primarily to promote the new currency. This is a practical measure to facilitate markets in the South (where the simultaneous circulation of several currencies inhibits trade) and to unify the country in accordance with the wealth sharing protocol, a key element of the CPA.

Consolidating a still-tenuous peace requires a rapid and visible redress of the underlying structural causes of conflict and underdevelopment. Redistribution of wealth must be accompanied by an overhaul of the governance apparatus. Without these issues very firmly on the table, long-term development and poverty reduction will never succeed in Sudan. Handing out cash, while leaving the rules of the game unchanged, does not equal empowerment or promote sustainable poverty reduction.

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1. www.unsudanig.org/JAM