

A. Gambe

Vorlese zum SID - Gespräch mit der Praxis:

Conflict transformation und der Rights Based Approach in der Praxis

Having experienced working in a post-conflict country, East Timor, with the United Nations, I looked after an opportunity to experience working in a conflict country, particularly in Africa. I visited several websites of development and humanitarian organizations in search of a position that requires my skills and expertise and one that seems reasonably challenging. From the DED website I found what I believed was the kind of challenge I was looking for –

advisor for human rights and conflict transformation at CARE International in the Sudan.

(Some key features of the Sudan see underneath).

The major responsibility of the position which is the institutionalization of rights-based programming at CARE Sudan by sensitizing all project staff of Care and of other institutions that might wish to participate, through workshops with the following principles and tools of CARE's rights-based approach:

By using a rights-based approach, CARE

- holds itself accountable to the people it serves
- looks at the underlying causes of poverty, which are often systemic or structural
- focuses on individuals or groups which are disadvantaged and disenfranchised
- strives to empower rights' holders to realize their rights and encourages duty bearers to be part of the solution
- strives to increase its ability to understand and influence policies and power relationships, as rights are closely linked to power
- works with partners, including civil society groups and in coalitions to enhance people's involvement in decisions that affect their lives.

And that was what interested me most. And I was most certain that the job was demanding. Coming from the outside without prior knowledge of CARE's philosophy and immediately tasked with the institutionalization of a most recent CARE's programming framework would be a heavy task. Still, I was confident that with my previous experience I would be able to meet the requirements of the job.

I arrived in Khartoum on 31 January 2002. Two days later, I started my job with CARE, and five days later, I visited CARE-assisted projects in IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps around Khartoum as part of my orientation. On the 10th day, I participated in a three-day annual planning workshop for CARE Sudan. I was completely overwhelmed with the amount and extent of information that I was confronted with during those first ten days of my work. On top of that I had to thoroughly understand CARE's rights-based approach in order to be able to impart it to all staff - members, a major reason for my secondment from DED to CARE.

In collaboration with the Assistant Country Director for Program, I designed an individual operating plan for six months which outlines my activities, their objectives and their expected outputs. The major activity was the conduct of RBA workshops for at least the project staff of two USAID-funded projects in the IDP camps in greater Khartoum: Basic Health Assistance and Food Security for War-Displaced. A second major activity was the assessment of a Canadian-funded peace building and conflict mitigation project in a garrison town in the south. Alongside these two

major activities I had to represent CARE in a UNDP-chaired peace network which consists of local and international organizations undertaking peace activities.

Mobility within Sudan is heavily curtailed. A visit to the IDP camps let alone travel outside Khartoum requires government permission. One does not have the guarantee that a permission would be granted, and even if one has acquired a permission, one does not still have the guarantee that this permission will not be revoked at whim. An example: In March, I flew to the south on a UN flight. All UN flights including the passengers' manifest must be cleared by the security. I reached my destination after a 6-hour flight only to be told that my travel permit had expired. I was immediately put on the same plane back to Khartoum.

In keeping with my individual operating plan, I conducted two 3-days workshop series on Rights Based Approach (RBA) and benefits-harms analysis for the Khartoum-based project staff of Care.

The rights-based approach is anchored on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), a document which most project staff are not familiar with. During the workshops, a strong sense of surprise among the project staff was palpable when they learned that, for example, every individual has **security rights** (freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of movement, right to life, liberty and security of person) and **political rights** (right to take part in the government of one's country, right to equal treatment before the law, right to a nationality). The major thrust of the workshops, however, was to make the project staff understand that CARE's beneficiaries are rights' bearers and must be treated as such in all CARE's programs. As rights' bearers, these beneficiaries are not simply recipients of charity but actors in their own development.

Now, there is a general unwillingness on the part of the Sudan government to accept the IDPs as citizens with full rights or to provide legal protection and secure access to land and services. It is not surprising therefore if any reference to the international bill of rights, let alone citation of the fact that the Government of Sudan has ratified the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights, would cause displeasure of the powers-that-be. This could very well be the straw that broke the camel's back that led to that fateful day of 30 July 2002, my sudden departure from the Sudan.

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Some key facts on Sudan - with an estimated population of 28 million:

- Three generations have lived through war. There has only been one decade of peace since 1955.
- More than two million people have died because of war since 1983.
- Sudan has in excess of four million internally displaced people (IDP) and large numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries. In the settlements around Khartoum alone, there are an estimated of up to two million IDPs, many of them women and children.
- Ninety-two percent of the population live below the poverty line.
- Only about one in three children go to school. The adult literacy rate is less than 15% in conflict zones.
- Less than one-quarter of the population of southern Sudan, and only about 60% in the north, have access to safe water.
- Frequent denials of access affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance to more than one million people.
- Oil production currently runs at 230,000 barrels a day, earning the government \$500m in 2000 and \$800m in 2001 - around 40 per cent of its total revenue. The IMF gives a conservative estimate of military spending at \$246m, equivalent to 27 percent of all government spending and representing the largest budget line.
- Sudan has a variety of natural resources and vast economic potential. The mineral-rich south offers prospects for mining: chromite reserves in southern Blue Nile state alone are estimated at one million tonnes. In northeast Sudan, near the Red Sea, is a huge gold reserve.
- Trade, particularly in the metropolitan area of Khartoum, is largely in the hands of second to third generation Syrians, Greeks, Armenians, Copts and Egyptians.