



**The Brookings Institution – University of Bern
Project on Internal Displacement**



**UNIVERSITÄT
BERN**

**Crossing Conflict Lines to Promote Good Governance in Sudan
Meeting with Sudanese Women Leaders
The Brookings Institution, 17 January 2007**

Summary Report

This meeting was part of a series of events for women leaders from around the world organized by the Initiative for Inclusive Security and hosted by the Project. The panel included six women from across Sudan to discuss their work in promoting good governance in Sudan. Participants included representatives from NGOs, academics, and human rights practitioners. Sarah Martin from Refugees International moderated the discussion.

During the meeting, the women talked about their work in Sudan towards promoting good governance and improving the lives of Sudanese women by bringing them into society. The two major focus areas for their work were: 1) democracy and governance and 2) the effectiveness of government.

As women have been kept out of political life in Sudan, the new peace processes have become an opportunity for women to enter into the both the peace process and the political process. For this reason, there is great need for training and capacity building, which would teach these women how to negotiate, state their demands and secure their rights. Progress has been made since the adoption of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which left the women's issue unclear. In the Darfur Peace Agreement, the issue is at the forefront. However, women were not invited to participate until the 7th round of the talks. Women's participation from the beginning is critical. It will be important to secure the inclusion of women in compensation programs as they have also suffered greatly in the conflicts.

Once women have been brought into the political process, their participation is necessary for the government to be effective. Poverty reduction programs are essential to improving the lives of Sudanese women. They need improved access to loans, special programs, and microfinance opportunities from the Sudanese government and other sources, such as the World Bank, Bank of South Sudan, and the Bank of Sudan.

In Sudan, women are often able to bridge party and ethnic lines because they all have similar issues as women. Recently, a Women's Caucus has been formed to do this in the government of Southern Sudan and a similar group has formed within the National Unity Government in Khartoum. Momentum is building, and once a critical mass is reached, the government will have to listen. Women, by working across party lines, can also serve as bridge builders in developing political solutions to the issues that are tearing the country apart.

The key legislative issues concerning women today are complex, including the access to medical care, access to the judicial system, access to loans, and land ownership issues, among others. Access to the system is important because of the differences between customary and actual law. Though the Government has few laws that actually discriminate against women, customary law reigns throughout, limiting the rights of women to divorce, loans, and land ownership. Also, because of the limited access to loan programs, women have been exploited by lenders who will lend small amounts with high interest rates. One proposed solution is to have more women lawyers who can represent women in court, as many judges often do not speak the same language as the plaintiffs. There have been volunteer lawyers, but many of them are new and not very experienced. This represents another area for increased capacity building. Access to these services will decrease the hold of poverty on Sudanese women.

The panelist from the Community Development Association (CDA) in Sudan also discussed a program for educating girls and women. Literacy is the key to development. This program established by the CDA builds literacy centers throughout Sudan and has an emergency education program for IDPs in West Darfur, which provides a basic level of education in the camps.

Another of the participants has been involved with a forum to promote crossing ethnic, regional, and political lines to find commonalities. This forum is designed to promote unity throughout the country.

The participants also discussed the impact they have had on men by talking with fighters and being able to convince them to stop fighting and work through the government. This occurred in Southern Sudan during the rebellion of the SPLA section of the Sudanese Army who had not been paid. The point was to internalize the conflict by reminding them of their own family members who could be hurt.

Prepared by Erin Williams
Rapporteur

APPENDIX

Crossing Conflict Lines to Promote Good Governance in Sudan

January 17, 2006

Introduction: **Elizabeth Ferris**, Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement

Moderator: **Sarah Martin**, Senior Advocate, Refugees International

Speaker Bios

Aisha Abubakr Subaira Adam is the Peace and Development Office Coordinator for the Community Development Association in Sudan. Formerly a Member of Parliament in Darfur, Ms. Adam is a member of the leading council of Darfur Forum for Peace Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence. She is also a member of the Education Committee in the Sudanese National Commission for Education, Science, and Culture (National Unesco) and a member of the Gender Expert Support Team that participated in the 7th round of the Darfur peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria. Ms. Adam is a graduate of Khartoum University with a degree in English. She is an activist for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Darfur and for increasing the role of women therein.

Mariam Alsadig Almahdi is currently the General Secretary Assistant for Communications in the Umma National Party (UNP). She has worked for the Forum of Arabic Thoughts Youth Branch, Alahfad University, and the Geneva Call. Her expertise lies in democracy, good governance, and post-conflict reconstruction. She attended the University of Jordan, the University of Liverpool, the University of Ahfad, and the Sudanese Medical Council for Specialization. Ms. Almahdi has engaged in peace-building activities through grassroots training, advocacy workshops, and human rights training. She is author of *Gender Analysis of Wealth Sharing Protocol in the CPA*, *Gender and Good Governance*, *Right to Vote*, and *Women and Being Religious*. Her achievements include the constitutional adoption of the quota for women in UNP at the general conference in 2003, and shifting the status of women's issues into the development sector. She has a particular interest in empowering women within the context of religion.

Amna Haroun was born in El Fashir, Northern Darfur, in Sudan. In 1979 she was one of the first Darfurian women graduates of the University of Khartoum. She received a High Diploma in Public Administration in 1980 and a High Diploma and MSC in Development Planning in 2001. From 1980-1999, Ms. Haroun worked in El Fashir in different municipal locality positions. After that she moved to a position with the Federal Bureau in Khartoum. Since 2001 she has worked as one of four Executive Directors in the Khartoum Locality. Currently, Ms. Haroun works with the Community Development Association on

development projects in Darfur, and she continues to be an active voice for peace in the region.

Betty Achan Ogwaro is a southern Sudanese politician and the current president of the Southern Sudanese Women Parliamentarian League in the Government of Southern Sudan Assembly. She is also the chair of the Southern Sudanese Women Caucus. She is a Member of Parliament representing Magwi County, in Eastern Equatoria State. She is a member of several committees, including specialized committee for Gender, Social Welfare, Youth and Sports.

Before becoming a refugee in the United Kingdom in 1995, Ms. Ogwaro served the Government of Southern Sudan as Director of Animal Production. In the UK, she worked as a microbiologist as the director of a charity organization. While in exile, Ms. Ogwaro was the chairperson for the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM) chapter office in the Midlands from 1999 to 2005. She led the SPLM's demonstration against the Government of Sudan in London in 2002.

Ms. Ogwaro received a bachelor's degree in animal science with honors from the University of Juba; a master's degree in veterinary science from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland; and she is currently finishing work on a PhD in microbiology at the University of Wolverhampton, UK.

Samia Hassan Siedahmed, a member of Sudan's National Assembly, has been involved in women's organizations throughout her entire career. Recently elected as the first Chair of the Assembly's new women's caucus, Ms. Siedahmed also serves on the national committee of the Great Lakes Region's women's task force. She is a member of the foreign affairs committee and the committee on culture, women, and youth affairs.

Ms. Siedahmed served as director of the Women Activities Center from 2003 to 2005, and as a member of the National Press Council from 2003 to 2004. From 2001 to 2005, she was a member of the Assembly's Community and Development Committee. Prior to and following her election, Ms. Siedahmed served as General Secretary Assistant for Political Affairs and Politics and Secretary of the Sudanese Women's General Union (SWGU). From 1995 to 1997, she directed the Women Training Center in Khartoum. As a student at Zagazig University in Egypt, where she earned a bachelor's degree in science, Ms. Siedahmed was a member of the general Sudanese student union, and for two years, she was responsible for Sudanese student girls. She has participated in numerous national and international conferences.

Dr. Hawa Suleiman Hussein Eisa is a member of the State Council Parliament and the Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation Team of Northern Darfur. She is the chairperson of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Commission and adviser to the Governor of North Darfur State. Dr. Eisa's other gender-specific positions include being a member of the Gender Expert Support Team that participated in the 7th round of the Darfur peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria, as well as a member of the Umguma Society for Women and Child Development.

Dr. Eisa is the Director General for the Ministry of Agriculture in North Darfur State, the chairperson of the Food Security Committee for North Darfur, and the Agriculture Coordinator for the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (D-JAM). She is a graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Khartoum and has worked with the Department of Animal Production in Germany.

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