

THE PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PEACE PROCESS

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Failed high-level mediation

In 1991 the southern liberation movement experienced a disastrous split. Before long, the new offshoot had joined with the Khartoum government to fight against the mainstream Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which soon lost most of the territory which it had gained. Ethnicity was only one of the reasons for the split, but nevertheless it became a major issue which led to the massacre of thousands of civilians in the two main ethnic groups, the Dinka of Dr John Garang de Mabior and the Nuer of Dr Riek Machar Teny Durgeon.²

From an early stage the Church attempted to mediate between Dr John and Dr Riek; indeed Bishop Paride Taban had privately advised Dr Riek against staging a coup some time before it actually took place. Regional ecumenical figures became involved, and the New Sudan Council of Churches' (NSCC) attempts included meetings with the presidents of Uganda and Kenya. All the bishops of Sudan threatened to go on hunger strike if a cease-fire was not implemented, women threatened a no-sex strike, and indeed at one point a cease-fire was announced, although it had limited success. At times it appeared that the protagonists were very close to reconciling, but ultimately the reconciliation attempts failed. They were not prepared to reconcile. Bishop Paride notes that "some other mediation initiatives with more powerful supporters started gaining momentum and we suddenly realised that some people were looking down on our poor and austere reconciliation initiatives. We, indeed, were not able to accommodate parties in glamorous hotels nor provide participants with pocket or sitting allowances as the new initiatives were doing" (Eisman, 2011, p 124). Multiple peace initiatives often give parties an excuse to procrastinate and evade their responsibilities.

Bishop Nathaniel Garang recalls his role in trying to mediate between Garang and Machar³:

Because of my experience in Anya Nya I was able to go between Dr John and Riek. I went with Rev Matthew Mathiang to meet Riek at Uliang. Riek said he thought Dr John was not doing well and thought he could do better. I told him that it was late because many people had been killed between the Dinka and the Nuer. It was all about power and greed for power. The Nuer did not like the struggle by their leadership because when they saw me they welcomed me as their bishop. When I returned the Dinka were surprised. These efforts are what led to Wunlit. When we saw how people were divided and killing each other we started the peace and reconciliation which Dr John and Riek both agreed with. We brought all the chiefs from the Dinka and the Nuer to Lokichogio. Dr Haruun Ruun and Telar Deng were with us. This improved the relationship between the Dinka and the Nuer.

1 This is an edited version of Chapter 6 of *The Voice of the Voiceless: The Role of the Church in the Sudanese Civil War 1983-2005*, by John Ashworth, Haruun Lual Ruun, Emmanuel Lowilla and Maura Ryan, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2014.

2 The original split was between SPLA-Torit (mainstream) and SPLA-Nasir. The reasons for the split included a power struggle between individuals; ethnicity; a poor human rights record and lack of democracy within the movement; and disagreement over whether the main aim of the liberation struggle was independence for South Sudan or a new, democratic, secular dispensation for the whole of a united Sudan.

3 Interview with Gachora Ngunjiri, 2013.

People to People

In 1994, partly as a result of the split, the mainstream SPLM/A convened the Chukudum Convention, which brought together several hundred people from all over South Sudan. This was the beginning of change within the movement to render it more democratic and accountable, to improve its human rights record, to strengthen its political wing – the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – and to institute a civil administration in the “liberated areas” controlled by the movement. Bishop Paride Taban's advice to the meeting included, “If you want to succeed, you must be committed to the people. You must love the people, you must respect the people” (Eisman, 2011, p 147). The moment they forget about the people, liberation becomes an empty word. This was followed in July 1997 by a meeting in Kajiko, near Yei, to iron out differences which had developed between the Church and the movement. It was a fiery meeting, but ended well. The SPLM/A mandated the Church to handle peace and reconciliation⁴, as well as other issues such as the provision of chaplains to the armed forces.

The ecumenical body in the liberated parts of South Sudan, the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), after much deliberation, decided that since it had failed to bring together the two principles, Dr John Garang and Dr Riek Machar, it would start at the other extreme, from the grassroots. The NSCC General Assembly “agreed on a Strategic Plan that gave the highest priority to exploring effective approaches and practical ways to bring peace at the grassroots levels” (NSCC, 2002, pp 48-49). Dr Haruun Ruun recalls: “As soon as we began this process, we realised we must integrate three elements: traditional values, Gospel values and modern intellectual peacebuilding techniques.”

This initiative did not emerge out of the blue. The Church already had experience with grassroots peacebuilding. For some years the Catholic Diocese of Torit had been putting the emphasis “on developing and maintaining peaceful relationships between various ethnic and regional groups and refusing to be caught up in the divisions which plague the political factions. Providing education and stimulus to these ends is a diocesan 'peace corps', comprising of carefully selected young people--identified by special blue suits--who move throughout the church community, building and maintaining the peace”, while NSCC had “asked church leaders to focus at the local level to try to build a momentum for peace in the parishes and the communities. A peace lectionary was printed and widely distributed to help identify a biblical basis for peace. Grassroots peacemaking workshops, prayers for peace and other area-based efforts toward peace were held in Upper Nile, Bahr El Ghazal and Equatoria in 1994” (Miller, 1995).

Consequently, in June 1998, a meeting was held in Lokichoggio, northern Kenya, bringing together influential chiefs and elders from the two communities, the Dinka and Nuer from the west bank of the Nile, along with Church leaders from the area.⁵ This was the first time in almost ten years that they had been able to meet, and constituted a first step in building trust, which was to become one of the key elements of the People to People Peace Process. They did this through telling their stories, the second key element of the peace strategy. “The story telling which took several days was sorrowful, but it raised awareness of the terror of the conflict, the expanse of suffering and destruction – and it built first, awareness and, gradually commitment to restoring good relations and making peace” (NSCC, 2002, p 50).

At the Lokichoggio Chiefs Peace Meeting, “the leaders began to recall how they and their ancestors had historically dealt with conflicts and restored peace” (NSCC, 2002, pp 50-51). Thus emerged the third key element: the use of traditional peace-building techniques. The fourth element followed quickly: “We are capable of making reconciliation even if Garang and Riek [Machar] are not

4 Some would argue that the Church does not need to be “mandated” to do this, as it already has its own mandate from God. Nevertheless, it is useful to have the clear go-ahead from the de facto authority on the ground.

5 Both communities are also found elsewhere in South Sudan, but the process began on the west bank.

present. Don't blame them – we are capable of making peace. We are responsible”. This reflects the principle that the community is the primary actor in peace-building. It must take responsibility; it must be ready and willing to make peace. At one point the elderly and arthritic Episcopal (Anglican) Bishop Nathaniel Garang, a co-founder of NSCC, held a heavy wooden chair, the “Chair of Leadership”, above his head, clearly suffering from the effort to do so, and cried, “Who will help me with this burden?” A chief rushed forward to help him, and the fifth element, symbolism and imagery, came into play (NSCC, 2002, pp 50-51).

An agreement was signed, and enactment was immediate. “I will allow the Nuer to come to my grazing area and water points starting in January so they will know we are serious about this peace”, said one Dinka chief. According to NSCC Peace Coordinator Telar Deng, the meeting was “a great achievement. We have not come together since we divided in 1991. As we say in Dinka, 'what destroys a home is not death – it is hatred'. Death cannot kill all of us, but hatred will disperse us and destroy us”. Presbyterian pastor Rev Matthew Mathiang Deang urged, “Let us not let this document shame us. In a few months we must not hear of any fighting” (NSCC, 2002, p 51).

Wunlit

A great deal of practical preparation then ensued. “Time seems to fly by!” (NSCC, 2002, p 52). Local people as well as the military factions controlling the area had to be mobilised, to say nothing of the donors. There were major logistical problems to be resolved, as well as security. Commander Salva Kiir came with heavy weapons and declared himself ready to fight any commander who threatened the conference; this deterrence served its purpose and there was no violence. Salva called for the drums of peace to be beaten to the ends of the south, and remained a staunch supporter of Church-led peace initiatives.

Perhaps the most important, and emotionally powerful, part of the preparation for the Church-led People to People Peace Process was the exchange visits in which five chiefs and a women's representative from each community, accompanied by Church leaders, visited the other community. Traditional rituals were performed. There was great fear, but also great courage, joy, hospitality and reciprocity. At one point, chiefs from one community offered to act as hostages to guarantee the safety of the others; the offer strengthened the resolve of the others and was graciously declined. “Ancestors took risks for peace, and so must we, being a chief means being ready to lead, even to die... so let us go in pursuit of peace, this is required of us!... The commitment, and the words and deeds of honour among the chiefs spread rapidly throughout all the communities” (NSCC, 2002, p 55). Seeing the opposing chiefs in their own territory, people were now convinced that a real peace process was under way. As the chiefs arrived, the local women washed their feet in welcome. Sadly one of the women who accompanied the chiefs, named Mary, was killed afterwards in an ambush on the way home.

A relatively obscure Dinka area called Wunlit was chosen as the site of the first main peace conference in February-March 1999. A whole new village of 150 mud and thatch houses plus a conference hall had to be built from scratch, cooking facilities provided, boreholes drilled, latrines dug, the dirt road repaired, and an airstrip created. “Women and girls brought grass and did the thatching while men and boys put up the buildings with poles and mud... Over one hundred bulls and many goats and chickens were brought” (NSCC, 2002, p 56). This work was coordinated by the late Mario Muor Muor and the Bahr el Ghazal Youth Development Association (BYDA). Hundreds of delegates (of whom one third were women) and hundreds more support staff congregated there, a total community of up to 2,000 people, all in the centre of an active war zone, with security guaranteed by the SPLA. Transport had to be arranged, although many people walked there, often from up to 160 km away. There were several working languages used at the conference. It was a community effort.

One group of Dr Riek Machar's supporters even arrived by plane from Khartoum. Nobody had been

informed, and the arrival of this unexpected flight annoyed the SPLA. There was talk of detaining the aircraft and its passengers, or simply sending them straight back to Khartoum. Dr Haruun Ruun recalls: "I sent Telar Deng to the SPLA commanders and he eventually persuaded them to let the passengers stay and participate in the conference and to allow the plane to return safely to Khartoum. This made a big impression on the Nuer participants. Later we learned that it had also impressed the southern Sudanese community in Khartoum, and that even the Khartoum government began to realise the seriousness of this reconciliation process. Once again it was Salva Kiir who was very understanding. He recognised that dialogue is not monologue and that to make peace you have to deal with people you differ with."

It is difficult to capture the atmosphere of such a meeting.⁶ Each clan group was composed of six official representatives under the chief, and included two elders and two women. Awut Deng led the delegates in singing a peace song which was known to both communities; it helped to change the mood and relax the tension. One of the high spots was the slaughter of a white bull ("Mabior" in the local language).

Mabior is the Bull of Peace that will be sacrificed for reconciliation and peace... Anyone who breaks this commitment to peace will follow the way of Mabior... The elders are making a peace and are taking an oath not to repeat atrocities previously committed. A curse is placed on any who partake of the Mabior sacrifice and later break the oath... It is a very serious curse; it is a curse of death". (NSCC, 2002, p 60)

It was a strong bull which did not die easily. NSCC and Church Ecumenical Action in Sudan (CEAS) staff member Liz Philippo recalls: "This bull was anxious and angry, pulling at his tether, trying to charge the priests of the fishing spear as they danced around him chanting and taunting him with spears. Finally he gave in. His throat was cut and the blood held up for blessing and oblation." Its struggles impressed the participants and gave added weight to the ritual. "The fighting spirit of Mabior was a powerful impression on everyone. One Chief spoke, 'You, Dinka and Nuer, I caution you to be very careful of what you have observed in Mabior. It was very wild. I have never seen a bull as wild as that bull. Mabior will take revenge on anyone who revives these conflicts. Mabior died for our reconciliation'" (NSCC, 2002, p 62). So potent is this sacrifice that some of the chiefs were ready to go home. "We have sacrificed the bull; we are now at peace."

Most of the meeting was preoccupied with the sixth element, truth. In the Nilotic tradition, peace can only truly be achieved when everyone knows fully what wrongs were committed. The two communities were each given an opportunity to tell their story, to "vomit out" all the suffering and bitterness. It is a painful time for all. As Philippo says, "The forum followed the traditional format of local courts. Each wronged group was allowed to speak long and fully of its issues as felt by each representative. Those accused were not permitted to speak. There was respectful silence for each speaker. Their stories often matched." Later there is an opportunity for rebuttal, but often there is no rebuttal. "There are no words for some things, and the time to speak is sometime filled with silence" (NSCC, 2002, p 65). Both sides acknowledge the truth of the accusations, but also recognise that they have each suffered in a similar way at the hands of the other. This leads to agreements including practical actions for peace, followed by the signing of a covenant. Philippo recalls it thus:

A peace document, including main points of resolution for peace reconciliation and future cooperation, is drawn up and read out in the different languages. It is approved. Now each participant must sign. Most are illiterate. An ink pad is the answer. Every conference goer lines up, and those that can write produce a dramatic flourishing signature. Others make a firm thumb print under which is written the

6 See NSCC, 2002, pp 59-61 for a credible attempt to do so.

name. There is great excitement and joy as peoples often apparently unrecognised make their mark on this historic and life changing document. Women in simple clothes, uneducated and often unappreciated for their decision making, cannot believe they are invited to sign. They cannot stop laughing and singing... Two days later two young boys are playing together in the village. One is Nuer and one is Dinka. Asked why they are playing together and not fighting they reply that 'we have signed the peace agreement'.

Finally, the peace has to be taken home and acted upon. Follow up Peace Councils were formed, and to date there has been no major breach of the peace accord on the west bank. Awut Deng recalls how Nuer displaced by the fighting in the oil fields of Upper Nile (now Unity State) were well-received by the Dinka. "Nuer and Dinka boys playing together would call each other 'my brother'; before Wunlit they would have killed each other." There was a great deal of talk about returning cattle which had been taken and women and children who had been abducted. A Dinka chief left the meeting and returned with two young boys. He admitted that they had been abducted, and asked if any Nuer present knew them; if so, he was ready to return them immediately. A Nuer chief recognised them as his sons, and immediately burst into tears. "I am not crying because my sons are being returned to me. I am crying because I have killed Dinka children!"

The role of the women was crucial. Awut Deng remembers:

I was the mobiliser for the delegates and local resources in Bahr el Ghazal, while Mario Muor Muor was in charge of construction and logistics. At one point they came to me and asked me to mobilise women to do the cooking. I said no! The women will do that naturally anyway, but what about the voice of the women in the conference? Who are the ones who suffer in war? It was me who insisted that one third of the delegates should be women, and that they should be allowed to speak. One woman, Ayen Maguot, even chaired one of the sub-committees, with Telar Deng as her translator. I also ensured that there were women on the Peace Councils set up by the conference. A number of abducted women and children were returned on the final day of the conference.

Peace mobiliser Anna Kima Hoth recalls:

I used to go into the communities and facilitate women's groups. Although most of them were not learned, they could remember most of the things we taught them. And this is how they kept their commitment of the peace agreement between Dinka and Nuer communities.

And Liz Philipppo remembers:

The men tended to speak long going back into histories of related issues. The women were brief and to the point. They often expressed the wish for the conflicts to stop. They were saddened at the loss of their husbands and sons, the abduction of daughters. They would like to see the banning of guns.

Others recall how the women reminded the men of women's traditional influence on war and peace, and threatened "a revolution... we will stop giving birth".

While the Peace Councils were very successful, the one glaring omission was the "peace dividend"

which was expected to be provided by international partners. The agreement called for the establishment of community police groups, with radios for communication. It also requested humanitarian aid. People began to return to their homes from where they had been displaced; water points, shelter, schools and clinics were needed to replace those which had been destroyed. Food was needed to help them to settle in, as well as for host communities who shared what little they had with the returnees. Seeds and tools were needed to break the cycle of dependency on relief food. Despite great efforts by Dr Haruun Ruun and others, very little assistance came from the international community. They were happy to support the high-profile peace conference, but always had excuses to avoid supporting the low-visibility follow-up. “It's not part of our strategic plan”; “We have no funding for that”; “Our mandate doesn't include education (or health or boreholes or whatever)”; “We don't work in that location”. International NGOs and donors seemed focused on their own narrow programmes and plans and were unable to recognise something of national strategic importance. It is to the credit of the people of the west bank that the peace held even without any significant humanitarian support.

Waat and Liliir

The process then moved to the east bank. Meetings were held in Waat (October 1999) and Liliir (May 2000). The situation on the east bank was complicated by various factors, including the number of different ethnic groups involved and various political considerations, so there was not such a clear-cut resolution as there had been in Wunlit. At the Waat meeting, a splinter rebel group formed under the leadership of Dr Michael Wal Duany, with its own political and military wings, the SSLM and the Provisional Military Command Council (PMCC), chaired by Peter Bol Kong. “It is to be separate from UDSF. It claims not to oppose Dr Riek per se, but as he is in Khartoum it is not appropriate for him to lead it” (Ashworth, 2004, p 5). In practice it was yet another small faction to add to the mix. NSCC was criticised for “facilitating” the foundation of a new political and military faction, particularly as Wal Duany and another leading SSLM figure, Gabriel Yoal, had been employed by NSCC to assist with the conference. NSCC had to make it very clear “that it has no political and military agenda. Of course once the process of empowerment and democratisation begins, nobody can predict where it will end!” (Ashworth, 2004, p 5). At Liliir, a bull was sacrificed and a covenant signed by those present, but many key communities were not able to attend, including Shilluk, Maban and some sections of both Nuer and Murle. Bishop Nathaniel Garang recalls⁷: “We even brought some Murle chiefs to the meeting. The other people were a little afraid when they saw the Murle come to the meeting but their relations improved so that their friction ended. This resulted in many abducted children and women released for return to their communities. Dowry was paid for those girls who had been taken by the soldiers as wives.”

Nevertheless, progress was made. Peacebuilding in South Sudan is not based on “successful” one-off peace conferences, but on a long process which has its ups and downs but constantly chips away at the conflict. It was often difficult to convince outsiders of this.

The 'success' of the NSCC People to People Process is that it is an indigenous church-led ongoing process. Although there are short-term fruits... its real impact will be long-term. Too much attention from international partners, donors and media is not helpful, particularly when it attempts to label stages of the process as 'success' or 'failure'. (Ashworth, 2004, p 5)

Strategic Linkages

By November 2000 it was time to take stock and evaluate the process. Dr Riek Machar had resigned from his alliance with Khartoum due to the failure of his 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement, but was still fighting against SPLA. A meeting designated “Strategic Linkages” was held in the small village

7 Interview with Gachora Nguniri, 2013.

of Wulu on the west bank, where CEAS and NSCC had an operational base and training centre, bringing together representatives from all the other conferences. Their basic message from the Wulu conference was: “We have made peace, but it is our sons who continue to encourage conflict” (referring of course to Dr John Garang and Dr Riek Machar). It highlighted a dynamic which the Church had always been aware of, that while ethnic conflict often has its own roots, it is manipulated and exacerbated by political and military interests.

This led to “Strategic Linkages 2”, held in the Kenyan city of Kisumu in June 2001, bringing together traditional leaders, elders and women from the grassroots with civil society, politicians, intellectuals, diaspora and representatives of the various factions of the liberation movements. For many of the chiefs and elders, this was their first opportunity to travel outside Sudan and to see a major town. Ashworth recalls:

It was one of many occasions where the wisdom of the traditional leaders, and their commitment to the good of their people, became evident. An illiterate elder would stand up and tell a story about animals and trees, and by the time he sat down he would have made a shrewd and complex political point far more eloquently than the politicians with their modern political jargon. The women also played a major role, as usual: “If you men keep on fighting, you will all kill yourselves. Then we women will use the money from the oil to buy white husbands for ourselves!”

The conference nearly didn't take place. “The SPLM/A declined [NSCC's] invitation and physically blocked participation of citizens – including traditional and church leaders – in areas under SPLM/A control. We regret their non-cooperation but look forward to working constructively with all factions, movements and political leaders, including the SPLM/A, to forward justice and peace in southern Sudan.”⁸ This failure of the SPLM to fully endorse the conference made NSCC aware of a final important element of the process, empowerment. NSCC had originally set out to make peace, not to empower people, but empowerment was an inevitable result of the process. SPLM may have felt challenged by this dynamic, as empowerment was not an element expected to emerge when the Church was given a mandate to bring peace and reconciliation.

Simmering tensions between Dr John Garang and Dr Haruun Ruun, as the figurehead of the Church in the liberated areas, came to a head in the context of the Kisumu meeting. The tension had been palpable at the Wunlit meeting. Dr Haruun appointed a number of people to assist with the process, including Telar Deng, John Luc, Michael Wal Duany and Peter Nyok Kot. Wal Duany was directly associated with Dr Riek Machar, and all were people with whom Dr John had differences. He demanded that they be dismissed but Ruun refused. Garang wanted to cancel Wunlit, but again Ruun refused. Garang had given NSCC a succession of names within SPLM to be their liaison, but none had proven very helpful, until finally NSCC was told to contact Commander Salva Kiir. Kiir was very supportive of the meeting and helped to make it happen. He reportedly told some of his commanders, “Those commanders who are against this meeting – where are their children? Are they here, suffering in this conflict?” NSCC always found Kiir to be patient, slow to anger, consultative and reconciliatory. He was committed to the unity of southerners in order to help end the war. He would try and try to influence people, but if he realises that it is hopeless, he eventually leaves them be.

NSCC Chair Fr Mark Kumbonyaki was physically removed from a plane in Yambio by SPLA security officers as he attempted to fly to Kisumu to participate in the meeting. Nevertheless, a number of important SPLM figures attended “unofficially”. As Rev Dr John Gatu says, “During the war the Church had a very strong voice. Even the Executive Secretary of NSCC was not very

popular among the movement leadership because he carried a lot of clout among the ordinary people. But I am glad that they all recognise the place of the Church”⁹.

“Unity of purpose, unity of effort, unity of ideals; these words sum up the spirit of Strategic Linkages 2” (Ashworth, 2004, p 63). The underlying message from the conference to both Dr John and Dr Riek was, “We fully support the liberation struggle and Dr John's leadership of it, but it is unacceptable that you continue the conflict between yourselves and your factions; you must unite”. The conference declared that, “All movements should: Immediately cease hostilities amongst themselves and commit to open dialogue to resolve political differences”, and also affirmed that “Self-determination is the central objective of the people’s liberation struggle”.¹⁰ Dr John Garang and Dr Riek Machar subsequently signed a peace agreement between SPLM/A and SPDF on 6th January 2002. While it is impossible to know exactly what caused the two “doctors”¹¹ to reconcile at that point, the Kisumu conference clearly played a significant role.

The reunion of the two main factions significantly reduced the suffering of the people on the ground and hastened the end of the civil war. Negotiations sponsored by IGAD, the African regional grouping, resulted in the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), ultimately leading to the referendum in January 2011 and independence for South Sudan in July 2011. The IGAD negotiations were strictly between the two warring parties, but the Church “shadowed” them with a series of three meetings in Entebbe, Uganda, bringing together individuals, parties, militia, movements and others from both north and south Sudan, and thus influenced the IGAD process from the sidelines. This “Entebbe Process” was a direct continuation of the People to People Peace Process.

Other conferences

Additional smaller conferences can also be considered, broadly, to have been part of the Church-led People to People Peace Process. Six months after Wunlit, Awut Deng organised a meeting in Yirol to find out how well the peace agreement was being implemented, and one year after Wunlit there was an anniversary celebration in Rumbek. Various meetings took place between different sections of the Nuer after the Waat and Kisumu conferences. In 2002, NSCC facilitated a long-awaited peace conference in Nakwatom in eastern Equatoria to address the conflict between the Didinga people and the SPLM/A, following earlier meetings in Chukudum (1996), Kikila (1997) and Chukudum again in 1998 (Eisman, 2011, p 155). Peace Councils set up on the west bank after Wunlit continued to hold meetings to maintain the peace and deal with any tensions which might arise. Meetings held as late as 2004 in Thiet and Panakar under the auspices of the secular NGO which took over were still seen as part of the People to People Process.

Model

The People to People Peace Process has been recognised as a model of grassroots peacemaking. Many secular NGOs in South Sudan have tried to copy it, usually without much success. To begin with, they lack the credibility and moral authority of the Church. In addition, they usually focus on the highly-visible conferences, neglecting all the years of patient prior preparation required before any major conferences are held, and they neglect the key elements which under-pinned the People to People process: the need to foster trust; telling of stories; the use of traditional reconciliation methods; acknowledgement that the community is the primary actor and must be ready to take responsibility for making peace; the importance of symbolism and imagery; a commitment to truth; a peace agreement that has practical measures for implementation and follow-up; and empowerment. Perhaps “patient preparation” should be underscored as well.

9 Interview with Gachora Ngunjiri, 2013.

10 Kisumu Declaration, 23 June 2001.

11 Southern Sudanese were often heard to say that many problems stemmed from “doctors”: Dr John Garang, Dr Riek Machar, Dr Lam Akol, Dr Michael Wal Duany, Dr Hassan al Turabi...

It must also be recognised that a conference of several hundred people engaged in telling their painful stories and acknowledging the truth that is accepted by both sides cannot be tightly time-tabled, finished and agreed within three days. These conferences must be allowed to continue as long as is necessary, even for many days or weeks. The process must also be allowed to continue, for years if necessary. Decades of conflict and trauma cannot be overcome in a few months; indeed it may take the same amount of decades¹². Quick fixes do not work. While the Church is of course concerned to stop immediate violence, nevertheless it recognises that “Peace is not merely the absence of war” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78). “Stopping the war is essential, but not sufficient for the establishment of a just and lasting peace”¹³. Unlike most NGOs and indeed most of the international community, the Church is in it for the long haul. The Church embodies immense patience and looks beyond the present suffering to a hope-filled future. In the Christian archetype death comes before resurrection, but in the end, resurrection does come.

It should be noted that NSCC did not have access to modern “peace studies” when planning and implementing the People to People Peace Process. At that time very little literature on peacebuilding was available. Amongst Catholic actors, the Caritas peacebuilding manual (Neufeldt et al, 2002) is now a staple, but it only appeared in 2002 and it was a few more years before it found its way to Sudan¹⁴. The “See, Judge, Act” model¹⁵, also known as the Pastoral Cycle, with its roots in the Young Christian Workers movement, has been available for much longer. For the Sudanese Church, the call to peace and reconciliation dawned slowly, reinforced by the Kajiko meeting in 1997 where the liberation movement specifically asked the Church to shoulder this task. Much of the work was reactive; there was no long-term strategy or plan. The team sat together after each step and planned the next step, but hardly knew where the process would go beyond that; it was very much “a story that grew in the telling” (J R R Tolkien). It was (and still is) an “emergent” process¹⁶. As well as the formal governing body of NSCC, a “think tank” was set up, comprising the Executive Secretary of NSCC and a small number of resource people from the churches and Church-related agencies. A key facilitator of the early stages of the process was Rev Bill Lowrey, a Presbyterian missionary well acquainted with the Nuer people. But nevertheless, “the passion for peace began to grow across Southern Sudan and began to take root in churches, at community levels and among common long-suffering Sudanese people” (NSCC, 2002, p 47).

During those early forays into peace work, the Church in Sudan was unaware of the sterling work of Mennonite John Paul Lederach on peace studies, and his pyramid model in which he identifies grassroots, mid-level and high level components of peace building (Lederach, 1997, p 39). NSCC first attempted (and failed) to reconcile the leaders (high level), then went back to the grassroots. From the grassroots, the wisdom of the elders expressed at the first Strategic Linkages conference led NSCC to the mid-level (“We have made peace; it is our sons who are the problem now”). From there, pressure was exerted on the principals to make peace at the high level, and at the same time NSCC and SCC entered the high-level national peace process via their Entebbe conferences and the SEF. Peace-building mobilises both horizontal and vertical dynamics.

12 Conversation with John Paul Lederach, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, March 2013.

13 *Let There Be A Just and Durable Peace in the Sudan: An Appeal by the Bishops of the Catholic and Episcopal Churches of Sudan*, Nairobi, 17 August 2001.

14 Indeed, copies of the manual in Sudan and South Sudan are still like gold dust. While some Catholic NGOs have a single copy, it is very difficult to obtain new copies.

15 Eg <http://www.ycw.ie/downloads/See-Judge-Act-Cards.pdf>, http://www.southwarkjandp.co.uk/resources_files/The%20Pastoral%20Cycle.pdf

16 Conversation with John Paul Lederach, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, March 2013.

Types of Actors

Approaches to Building Peace

Level 1: Top Leadership

Military/political/religious
leaders with high visibility

Focus on high-level negotiations
Emphasizes cease-fire
Led by highly visible,
single mediator

Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership

Leaders respected in sectors
Ethnic/religious leaders
Academics/intellectuals
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Problem-solving workshops
Training in conflict resolution
Peace commissions
Insider-partial teams

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership

Local leaders
Leaders of indigenous NGOs
Community developers
Local health officials
Refugee camp leaders

Local peace commissions
Grassroots training
Prejudice reduction
Psychosocial work
in postwar trauma

↑
Affected Population
↓

Derived from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

Elsewhere, Lederach says, “I am uneasy with the growing technique-oriented view of change in settings of violence that seems to dominate much of professional conflict resolution approaches” (Lederach, 2005, p 52). He speaks of “invoking the moral imagination... which is not found in perfecting or applying the techniques or the skills of a process... My feeling is that we have overemphasised the technical aspects and political content to the detriment of the art of giving birth to and keeping a process creatively alive” (Lederach, 2005, p 70), of leaving space for serendipity, intuition, art and the web of relationships.

All this would be familiar to those who work for peace in Sudan. Indeed, it could be said that rather than designing a process, People to People opened up a space whereby the people themselves could pursue peace and reconciliation; the process was designed as a result of what emerged within that space.¹⁷

After the Liliir meeting, People to People Peacebuilding had caught the attention of donors, and the US government offered a multi-million dollar grant to continue the process. Local and international NGOs were required to form consortia to bid for the grant. NSCC allied itself with a large US secular NGO which duly won the grant, based on NSCC's track record and credibility. Immediately afterwards, the international NGO side-lined NSCC and took over the programme itself. Arguably it concentrated on the highly visible conferences rather than the years of patient preparation and trust-building, it did not have the relationships on the ground and the legitimacy which the Church had, and it relied on “professional” techniques and skills. But the People to People Peace Process

¹⁷ Conversation with Fanie du Toit, Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town, June 2013.

effectively came to an end at that point. The “moral imagination” was lacking.

Sudan has become “a laboratory for those who study peace”¹⁸, particularly within the Church, and the experience of the peace pioneers of Sudan now informs international thinking. Praxis informs theology and theology informs praxis. At the same time the ongoing peace work of the Sudanese and South Sudanese Church is benefiting from these academic studies and theoretical models.

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