



COMMON SENSE 2

A CALL FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESS

ABOUT SSLM

The South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) formed in January 2000, in Upper Nile Region of South Sudan, to restore unity and democratic civic order among a people that have been devastated by lawlessness, overlooked by the outside world since 1991, and politically neutralized.

In mobilizing people for peace-building, the SSLM aims to complement the efforts of other political and military groups who are defending South Sudan against Arab/Islamic domination and oppression.

The SSLM follows two avenues to assert the rights of the people of South Sudan to freedom and self-determination. First, we seek the peaceful resolution of the conflict through negotiated settlement. Second, we will defend ourselves against Northern aggression.

It is the SSLM's belief that peaceful resolution of conflict must build upon the civic tradition of the people. It must encourage reconciliation and forgiveness. And it must focus upon the common ground of a unity of purpose.

Mediation between the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) has consumed immeasurable hours and countless dollars and for more than twenty years. The most prominent intervention is the IGAD forum, which facilitated recent talks in Machakos, Kenya.

The Machakos Protocol made clear that a referendum for self-determination for South Sudan would be at the foundation of any future peace agreement. While some saw this as a diplomatic achievement, soon after the agreement was reached, the GoS and SPLA broke off the talks.

The GoS says it pulled out of Machakos to protest SPLA's attack and capture of Torit town. The SPLA says it attacked Torit and Kapoeta in reaction to GoS aerial bombardments and to regain lost territory. These are just surface explanations. Why did these instances of violence really occur?

On one hand, the GoS is under pressure (both internally and externally, but especially from Arab states led by Egypt and Libya) not to accept self-determination for South Sudan. Thus, the SPLA attack offered the GoS an opportunity to pull out of the talks before the issue of self-determination was pressed further.

On the other hand, John Garang and his SPLA faction are not happy with the Machakos Protocol as it stands. The democracy built into the interim period frightens them. From their viewpoint, democratic self-determination carries the risk that elections will cost them not only a loss of power, but also control of peacetime foreign aid. The need for resources explains why the SPLA turned their guns on Torit and Kapoeta, and not on some other target. Revenue from gold mines in the area always increases whenever the SPLA controls the towns.

The breakdown of the Machakos talks underscores what clearly is a pattern. Analysts are beginning to see that the problem lies in the forum's structure. Change is needed.

The IGAD forum could become an effective mechanism for peacebuilding by taking heed to lessons learned in the field of conflict resolution over the past twenty years.

Some of these lessons are:

1. Include all groups with military power, otherwise, peace won't be the result.

While talks have reached agreement on a number of important issues such as self-determination and state and religion, the GoS and the SPLA are seen as having completely different end-objectives in mind. This perception may explain why so many parties are stressing, and even over-stressing, the importance of having international powers provide guarantees to ensure that agreements are honored during the critical phase of implementation. These guarantees are not only to protect the GoS from the SPLA and vice versa, but also to protect Sudanese people from the GoS and the SPLA.

Yet international guarantors cannot guarantee any agreement which is not genuinely supported by those affected. Excluding political groups with military power makes the implementation of agreements more difficult, if not impossible.

The horrific consequences of exclusive agreements are not difficult to imagine. Who, for example, will control security during the interim period? There are a number of political groups in South Sudan with armed forces, and John Garang wants to garner them all under SPLA command. Can he achieve his objective through excluding his rivals from the talks? Will the result of Garang's agreement mean peace or bloodshed for the people of South Sudan?

If the Sudanese really mean peace, then all parties must come to the table and reject the war option together.

2. Include non-military groups. This will help make the peace one that benefits more than just the soldiers.

Reaching agreement between the two biggest armed sectors is not an end in and of itself. Rather, it is building a broad base of support for a negotiated settlement that is essential to its success. The various sectors of society should be viewed as resources, not problems. The grassroots demand for talks, rather than for violence, is a driving force leading to settlement. A 2001 study found that men and women in southern Sudan felt that peace could be achieved on all conflict levels if there is respect between Sudanese in all aspects of life. This includes culture, religion, social, and political factors, and not just agreement on power sharing.

Time must be spent creating networks and platforms that promote coalition, coordination, and constituency building on the grassroots level. Groups should be encouraged to seek common ground so they can share the differing resources each brings to the table. Institution building should be stimulated at all levels of society, both to promote peacetime goals and to prevent an elite from dominating the process and manipulating the issues to their own advantage. "We shall continue to support legitimate initiatives," one church leader said. "Peacemaking is a hard work. It has to involve the beneficiaries at all stages of design. This will make it stand a better chance of success."

Centralization of the peace process may be neater, but it is not satisfactory in the long run, as repeated conflict in so many African countries has demonstrated. IGAD invited the GoS and SPLA to the table as the "main combatants." The rules of procedure drawn up by IGAD in 1994 prevent any new party from joining the process if either the GoS or SPLA objects.

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"...democracy is not a place, not an end point, but a dynamic way of life... We become full citizens by doing, not simply by decrying the inequities and barriers to participation. We become full citizens by engaging with others, defining our own interests while we uncover their interests. We become full citizens as we gain confidence—confidence that we do have something important to contribute, confidence that through vigorous public dialogue we will come to sound judgment on even the largest public issues."

Lappé and Du Bois,
The Quickenings of America

The list of parties that ought to be included in some manner is a long one:

- A. northern Sudan (inside the Sudan)
 - Umma Party
 - People's Congress Party (formerly the National Islamic Front)
 - National Congress Party
- B. northern Sudan (outside the Sudan)
 - National Democratic Alliance (including DUP and Communist Party.)
 - Non- NDA groups.
- C. southern Sudan (inside the Sudan)
 - United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF)
 - Union of Sudan African Party (USAP)
 - Southern States Coordinating Council
- D. southern Sudan (outside the Sudan)
 - South Sudan Democratic Forum (Members: South Sudan Liberation Movement, Civic Forum, Referendum Forum, SPLM–United)
 - Non-South Sudan Democratic Forum groups.

3. Diffuse aid and power, do not concentrate it. When there are more leaders involved, they must direct more effort toward the people's goals instead of their own.

Peace efforts must take seriously the harmfulness of focusing exclusively on the conflict between the GoS and the SPLA and ignoring the on-going inter-factional fighting between the southern groups. The South/South division, more so than the North/South conflict, has the potential to become another Rwanda.

Centralization has further aggravated the internal situation, resulting in the denial of humanitarian aid to some southern groups. The command-and-control structure of the SPLA's New Sudan, for example, removes the authority of local elders and bypasses both traditional and non-military institutions, such as spiritual leadership.

Simmering on the back burner is grassroots dissatisfaction with centralized power, because Sudanese people value broad-based participation, both as an echo of the past and as a hope for a democratic future. Also simmering is the severe lack of food and relief services in the greater Upper Nile that is creating a large aggrieved internal community and a correspondingly volatile situation. If there is no cessation of hostilities and relief services are not equally provided, this will undermine the commitment of the people and parties to peace talks.

4. Constantly keep in mind the peaceful future, not just the present war. Cessation of hostilities is not the only objective.

The IGAD forum must make its goal clear. Is it short-term (reaching a one-time settlement) or is it long-term (empowerment— allowing disputes to be shaped and settled by the disputants themselves)?

When asked to define peace, a woman from the Acoli community said, "Peace is understanding and respect for others and humanity. The SPLA and the GoS do not understand the word peace, because none of those leaders are going hungry. Their children are in schools. They live the high life of rich people, so they are not missing anything."

A peacemaking program that puts tools for analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation into the hands of the grassroots

people would give tools that could be used to disarm hidden agendas. Public opinion is key in assuring that politicians implement and honor the settlement.

No observer can fail to be struck by the nature of the concerns expressed by grassroots peace conference participants when they are given the chance to develop their own ideas on how to resolve problems. They uniformly seek very practical solutions involving community security, health enhancement, education, food production, and road building.

These are not the concerns of current participants in the IGAD peace talks.

A lesson from history...

“You have to think of the General Assembly as a place where bridges are built between peoples. We in the United States are an impatient people. We want to see results tomorrow. I am not sure sometimes that it isn’t the people who can out-wait the other people, who have the advantage. Frequently, moving too fast can set you back.”

Eleanor Roosevelt, speaking at the opening of a series of United Nations seminars, December 17, 1954

5. Put non-military items on the agenda. Even without a final peace, progress can be made.

Peacebuilding is more than a one-time event. It is a process that includes all activities that move a community or society toward a more stable, secure, just, and peaceful future. Peacebuilding is really about helping people in the war zone return to normal life. It includes restoring civil society, providing health care and education services, sharing grazing lands and fishing grounds, responsible development of water and natural resources, as well as encouraging trade and other productive endeavors.

How the international community can help

Restructuring the IGAD forum does not require starting from scratch. The mediators can agree now to amend the Protocol to include other northern and southern Sudanese parties in the talks. They can agree now not to attempt to implement an agreement that is made without including all parties in the process of taking ownership and taking into account their views.

All mediators, but especially the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway, should play a role in bringing individual leaders of all South Sudanese parties together. This has been done with Iraqi and Afghani factions. Laying the groundwork for lasting peace takes time. The process should have begun years ago. It is not too late.

The South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) appreciates the role of the international community, especially the United States and the members of the European Union, in helping to relieve the immense suffering and social injustices being inflicted upon the peoples of South Sudan. The international community can help best by:

- Helping to restructure the IGAD forum following a model that includes all groups.
- Encouraging the People to People Peace Process in South Sudan to expand on the grassroots level, building broad-based southern unity.
- Putting their support behind even-handed efforts and material assistance that build peace and harmony among all peoples of South Sudan.
- Calling for reconciliation, peace, and unity through confederate cooperation among peoples of South Sudan in promoting dialogue, building peace, and restoring civil society.