



SUCCESS STORY

Citizen Activists in Kordofan Take Civic Education to the Streets



Market goers gather in the village of Siteb for a discussion on Sudan's peace accord.

USAID/OTI provided support for a series of public forums on peace protocols aimed at protecting the rights of pastoralists living along Sudan's north-south border.

August 2008 – Sudan's fragile peace continues to be threatened by the lack of accurate information on the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Pastoralists whose livelihoods depend on seasonal migrations between the north and the south, such as the Misseriya tribe, have concerns about the CPA's endorsement of a referendum on self-determination for Southern Sudan in 2011 and about how the referendum will affect their way of life.

In an effort to inform citizens of their rights under the CPA, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported a local civil society organization (CSO) to conduct public forums in the Misseriya areas of Southern Kordofan in the fall of 2007. Thousands of people gathered for 20 dialogue sessions held in town centers and at outdoor markets. The CSO brought

copies of the CPA to the forums and initiated discussions on CPA protocols that aim to protect the pastoralists' right to continue grazing livestock along traditional migratory routes that cross into Southern Sudan. In addition, pamphlets on the national census and elections – two key markers in the peace process – were distributed.

Prior to convening the forums, members of the CSO took part in a training course to learn facilitation techniques and hone their understanding of the CPA protocols designed to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of border groups like the Misseriya.

The first two sessions were held in the railway town of Babanusa and reached more than 500 people, including laborers, nomads, government authorities, university professors and students, and passersby. Feedback on the sessions indicated that residents want to understand the CPA so that they can pressure authorities to fulfill their obligations in accordance with the legally binding agreement. Following one of the forums, a group of citizens from the towns of Muglad and Al Fula went to the state capital to urge the government to launch preparations for the upcoming elections.

Nearly a year after USAID/OTI's initial support, the CSO continues to promote civic engagement in Southern Kordofan. In the spring of 2008, the group organized a conference in Al Fula on peaceful co-existence and the CPA that was attended by 200 people, including representatives of all key political parties.