

The Initiative for Inclusive Security

A Program of Hunt Alternatives Fund

August 23, 2006

Contact:
Evelyn Thornton, 202-403-2000
Megan Fowler and Kenneth Bacon,
202-828-0110

The following bulletin was written jointly by The Initiative for Inclusive Security and Refugees International.

Sudan: Can the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation Help Bring Peace to Darfur?

With the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in a state of peril, the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation is more critical than ever. Many see the broad based, inclusive political dialogue called for in the DPA as the last hope for salvaging the agreement and building peace.

With creative leadership and sustained engagement from the international community the enormous challenges facing the Dialogue might be surmounted and at long last the people of Darfur would have a voice in shaping their peace process.

The current crisis facing the DPA is directly related to the exclusive process through which it was created. The negotiations held far from Darfur in Abuja, Nigeria brought together only the government of Sudan and armed movement leaders who represent less than 20 percent of the population of Darfur. Key stakeholders, including the Baggara Rizeigat Arabs, civil society leaders and women were largely excluded. The movement leaders and their negotiating teams made decisions that would affect the future of Darfur, but failed to communicate effectively with the populations they claimed to represent. Now, with only Minni Arkoi Minawi and the Government of Sudan as signatories and violence in many places increasing, Darfurians feel further alienated from the agreement. In the words of one Fur tribal leader, “The DPA is only words on paper, it means nothing to us. Our lives have only gotten worse since it was signed.”

Chapter four in the DPA calls for a Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation “in which representatives of all Darfurian stakeholders can meet to discuss the challenges of restoring

peace to their land, overcoming the divisions between communities, and resolving existing problems to build a common future.” The DDDC was envisioned as a way to build support for the DPA and address important outstanding issues of reconciliation, reconstruction, and political representation. However, there is a great deal of confusion about the Dialogue because the DPA does not clearly define its specific objectives, the process for achieving them, or the mechanism for implementing its outcomes. If it is to help bring peace to Darfur, the DDDC must be a comprehensive process that includes DPA signatories and non-signatories alike. In a transparent, efficient, and neutral manner, the Dialogue must build from the bottom up using traditional reconciliation mechanisms as well as new problem solving and conflict resolution techniques to enable the people of Darfur to grapple with the issues they face and propose possible solutions. Critically, there must be some form of guarantee that their recommendations will be considered and implemented.

To ensure that the DDDC is effective, the following issues must be addressed:

SECURITY

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 25,000 people were

displaced by fighting in North Darfur in July and rampant violence prevented food distribution by the World Food Program to nearly half a million. In a state of such insecurity it will be impossible to start the DDDC in many parts of Darfur. While immediate term efforts should focus on the enhanced ceasefire agreement and getting the parties to stop fighting, it is nonetheless critical to begin planning for the Dialogue and organizing small preparatory consultations where security permits. A vigorous, accessible political process that promises concrete dividends to all Darfurians is the only way to break the conflict's destructive cycle.

LEADERSHIP

The DPA tasks the African Union with the primary responsibility for the DDDC. The AU quite simply does not have the staff, resources, or credibility to lead the Dialogue effectively alone and they know it. There are just three full time AU officials dedicated to implementing the DPA and they are operating without a budget. Various donor countries have committed to providing additional staff and technical assistance, but help has been slow in coming and still falls far short of what will be required to facilitate such a critical Dialogue. The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has a large, Darfur-wide presence and is already assisting the AU with preparations for the Dialogue and its initial consultations. However, as pressure builds for an enhanced political solution to the ongoing crisis, the UN will need to play a much stronger, more visible role.

PROCESS AND REPRESENTATION

There is growing acknowledgement that the DDDC cannot be one large conference as was originally envisioned in the DPA. It must be a far reaching process of consultation that spans the whole of Darfur, moves beyond the confines of the DPA, and is rooted in local issues and conflict resolution processes. As Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim, chairperson of the Sudanese Development Organization, says in his concept note about the Dialogue, "It has to start from the grassroots and build up in layers, until the final conference is reached."

Wisely, the AU and UN are initiating quiet dialogue among Darfurians about the DPA and the DDDC. Simultaneously they are planning a widespread bottom-up series of consultations that will allow participants to state their concerns, generate possible solutions, and select delegates to carry their proposals forward to the next stage of the process. The AU and UN teams also will strive to use indigenous recon-

ciliation processes to resolve localized conflicts. Though the approach is admirable in theory, it will require numerous skilled and experienced facilitators and conflict resolution specialists to succeed.

As the formal process takes shape, perhaps nothing will be more essential, or more difficult, than the selection of representative delegates—to the Preparatory Committee that will guide the entire process, to the preparatory conferences that will identify agenda items and initial recommendations, and to the culminating forums. The DPA calls for 60 percent of the delegates to be selected on the basis of community and tribal representation and 40 percent as representatives of other stakeholder groups including civil society organizations, women, and youth.

Some of the key stakeholders who must be represented on the Committee and fully integrated into the DDDC process include: representatives of all tribal groups; armed groups; women; youth; displaced persons (including refugees); civil society organizations; academics, Darfurian diaspora and Darfurians living in other parts of Sudan. These groups should nominate their own representatives through regional preparatory conferences. For each stage of the process, the AU, with the assistance of the UN, needs to consult closely with respected important stakeholder groups including civil society organizations such as the Darfur Forum for Peace and Coexistence led by a former Wali of North Darfur, the Sudanese Organization Against Torture, Community Development Association, and Sudanese Development Organization.

The participation of women in the DDDC will be essential. Women and children, who comprise over 80 percent of the displaced persons living in camps, have borne the brunt of the conflict in which they played a minimal role and have vested stakes in its resolution. In addition, in numerous conflicts around the globe including Rwanda and Liberia, women have been the first to work across conflict lines toward reconciliation and reconstruction. (For research and other resources, see www.womenwagingpeace.net) Though there are few well-organized or well-resourced women's organizations in Darfur, there are many strong women leaders who need to be at the frontlines of the Dialogue. For example, the Gender Experts Support Team (GEST) transcends tribal and geographic boundaries of Darfur. The team went to the Abuja negotiations in the seventh round with the support of the African Union and the United Nations Development Fund for Women. In the short three weeks that they participated in the talks, they achieved

important successes. The DPA, for all its shortcomings, is one of the most gender sensitive peace accords in history. The GEST continues to work together to articulate women's priorities and ensure that women are not sidelined in the implementation of the DPA, particularly the DDDC.

Delegate selection will need to be transparent and balanced; it must be evident that the invitation lists are not controlled or manipulated by any of the DPA signatories or other parties to the Abuja negotiations. Already, divisions that have been sowed between the Fur and Zaghawa tribes and the politicization of the Native Administration have undermined the authority of traditional leaders and created an atmosphere of bitter mistrust. The tribal reconciliation conferences organized by the government in the past few years, for example, lacked credibility and did little to build mutual understanding or foster cooperation. One influential civil society leader in Nyala said that, "The government-run conferences sowed hatred rather than peace." Constant vigilance and oversight by the DDDC leadership and the international community will be key to avoiding manipulation.

Unfortunately, the decision-making powers of the DDDC, as outlined in the DPA, are weak and "advisory". It is unfair to expect Darfurians to deliberate on the political and social future of Darfur—including such critical issues as land rights, compensation, disarmament, and returns of the displaced—without some assurance that their recommendations will be honored. If the DDDC has any hope of being a successful process that entices remaining rebel factions back to the table, the signatories to the DPA must agree in advance to a mechanism that will hold them accountable to considering and accepting its recommendations. There is some hope that this is possible as the government has indicated it will be willing to "enrich and enhance" the DPA through the DDDC and implementation.

The Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation will only succeed if people perceive it to be a neutral, participatory process where they can openly discuss their concerns with the promise of tangible results. Significant improvements in security; strong, respected leadership at all levels; an effective communications strategy; an inclusive participant selection process; and a comprehensive, multilayered web of consultations will all be vital if the DDDC is to help bring about peace. The challenges are enormous but so are the stakes. With careful, creative, diplomacy and sustained financial and technical support, the international community can help the people of Darfur achieve the peace they so desperately seek.

THE INITIATIVE FOR INCLUSIVE SECURITY AND REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL RECOMMEND THAT:

- ❑ UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, persist with efforts to transition to a large UN peacekeeping force with a strong mandate and increase resources for UNMIS's civil affairs team.
- ❑ The US appoint a special envoy to ensure sustained, high-level US attention to resolving all aspects of the ongoing crisis.
- ❑ The international community, particularly the UN and African Union, press all groups to stop fighting and find creative incentives for them to engage in the political process.
- ❑ The African Union and UN consult with key stakeholder groups to:
 - establish the DDDC Preparatory Committee and Secretariat;
 - clarify the objectives of the Dialogue and mechanism for implementing its recommendations; and
 - develop a careful communications strategy that helps rebuild trust with the people of Darfur.
- ❑ Donors provide immediate and sufficient financial and technical assistance, including skilled facilitators and conflict resolution specialists, to the African Union and the UN to run the dialogue.
- ❑ The African Union and UN pay particular attention to the important role that women and youth can play in the Dialogue and find innovative ways to ensure their meaningful participation.

Refugees International president Ken Bacon, communications manager Megan Fowler, and Evelyn Thornton advocacy and partnership specialist of The Initiative for Inclusive Security, recently returned from Darfur.