



MP/Public dialogue, Wulu, Lakes state, South Sudan Photo: Crispin Hughes

## SIX LESSONS FROM THE WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE STATE GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME IN SOUTH SUDAN

Since 2012, Within and Without the State has been working in South Sudan to improve the relationship between citizen and state, mainly using the 'social contract' model. Richard Chilvers, WWS' learning and communications officer, recently visited and identified six lessons on how to support positive change in gender equality, peacebuilding and working with the state.

# 1. Work with existing state structures rather than inventing parallel systems.

**County Legislative Councils:** Oxfam partner CEPO in Lakes State found the Judiciary and Executive of both state and county had not complied with the provisions of the Local Government Act for the establishment of County Legislative Councils (CLCs). Under the Local Government Act of 2009, there is provision for CLCs in all ten states of South Sudan, but in some States none were functioning and the state was not investing in them as they are a check to their expenditure. The CLCs are meant to supervise the executive council, enact by-laws, ensure social services delivery, approve budgets and promote human rights and democracy. The fact they were not functioning meant transparency and accountability were missing. CEPO had already begun promoting open community public forums, but in the second year of WWS, worked to establish functioning legislative structures at local government level as legislated for. CEPO lobbied the Local Government Board at the national level which is responsible for implementing the Local Government Act. At the state level, CEPO lobbied the State Minister of Local Government.

There are now functioning CLCs which seek to ensure the accountability of the executives in all eight counties of Lakes state. CEPO also delivered trainings on budget tracking to ensure the CLCs were able to gauge policy direction as well as scrutinising itemised budgets. They then gathered feedback from the community on whether money was spent as stated. At the legislative council level there is a Budget and Planning committee of seven members. CEPO trained these county councillors and the chairpersons in roles and responsibilities, financial management, human rights protection, governance, service delivery, planning, devolution of powers and conflict mitigation. They trained four groups in three counties. The World Bank through the local government service delivery project (LOGOSEED) gives the Local Government Board of South Sudan approximately \$3m a year to support local service delivery, however the condition for this grants is that there must be a functioning and trained CLCs.

CEPO also unearths fraud. For example CEPO heard that retired state employees had not been paid their pensions. They approached the Ministry of Finance and were told the money had been paid out to the State Minister who had simply diverted the 14,000 SSp (£1,500). CEPO alerted the media and made sure the public knew about it in a public accountability forum. They put a petition in to the Public Accounts Committee in the State Legislature of Lakes state. The petition, signed by at least 200 people, confirmed the alleged corruption with evidence and the committee sat and considered it before passing it to the Parliament to raise a motion to investigate the allegation.

**Boma/Payam Development Committees:** At first Oxfam partner SUTCO established two Community Accountability Committees (CACs) which met monthly with 20 representatives from across the community (women, disabled, business, youth, chiefs, religious leaders) to gather the concerns of the community. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 2009, each Payam has to make its planned budget publically available. The CACs were designed to raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of South Sudanese citizens, to monitor the expenditure of public money from the state to the county to the Payams and to form a bridge between the community and local government as people feel the government is far from

them. Communities identify their needs such as for schools, clinics, roads and water which should then be reflected in the area development plans. The drafting of the Terms of Reference for CACs took a participatory approach in consulting the community and sharing with other institutions for comments, for example, the South Sudanese Human Rights Commission and local government board.

The CACs were functioning well, but had no official mandate from the state to operate and as a result faced challenges from the state police when working with the community as well as being unable to actually operate. In the 2009 Local Government Act there is a provision for Payam Development Committees to raise awareness of the roles of citizens. They have applied to change the CACs to Boma/Payam Development Committees as it makes them officially sanctioned and there is possible state funding available. Once this is officially signed off by the Local Government Board of South Sudan. (SUTCO has been waiting for eight months to get this signed off) the plan is to replicate it across the country. Specific trainings were delivered on budget tracking and how to liaise with Payams and then forward cases to the Human Rights Commission or Anti-Corruption Commission. They also ran trainings on leadership and communication and how to work with the media and plan others on conflict resolution.



*Areas of operation of WWS in South Sudan*

## **2. Build gender equality by demonstrating increased economic productivity at household level and involve the whole community including men and religious leaders**

In Dinka culture (Lakes state is majority Dinka) household chores are usually carried out by women. Oxfam partner APARD did a survey of livelihoods in the family to discover what work people

were doing daily that was contributing to the family income. They found women spent by far the most time in income generation such as farming, but also on childcare, fetching firewood, cleaning, cooking and mending clothes. They found men spent more time in community activities like meetings, marriages and socialising.

The programme interviewed beneficiaries/women and worked with them to develop men and women's collective responsibility for doing household work, caring for children, cooking and agriculture. They found that empowering women threatened male power and to address this they held workshops which encouraged both men and women to talk about household incomes. Women would meet separately at first, then a spokeswoman would be elected to feed back to the whole group. This was revolutionary in the Dinka culture as rather than separating the sexes it encouraged women to speak out in mixed groups.

The work was built on five pillars:

1. Men and women sharing decisions together – which challenges traditional Dinka practice.
2. Men and women sharing resources such as cattle, goats, chickens and farm products like sorghum and maize. Leadership sharing. For example there is just one woman governor of the ten states. Women can now go and see the cows for the dowry for their daughters and sit in on the discussions when this price is agreed.
3. Domestic role sharing
4. Equality in education. It is widely held girls should not be prioritised in getting an education, but by showing positive examples such as women who run businesses or train to be doctors and then serve their community, these barriers can be overcome.
5. Leadership training

APARD formed gender groups at the start of the WWS project and carried out awareness meetings, community dialogues and gender training with this group since 2013. Their gender groups at first faced opposition from male traditional leaders saying these are not culturally acceptable practices. They brought women to workshops and helped make the argument that this would help women support their families, particularly those who had lost a husband in the conflict. The women argued they were not breaking the culture, but creating more sustainable livelihoods that would benefit the whole community. They started to demonstrate economic benefit of women having a share in the economic productiveness of their homes.

Men also began to realise that women are good managers. Some women are now able to own chicken and goats and even have a share in cattle. When Dinka girls are married (often at a young age), her family is given cattle by her future husband as a dowry. Traditionally, the mother of the bride is not supposed to be present among the in-laws when the bargaining takes place or when the cows are visited. So she does not know what people discussed nor does she know the cows before they are handed over. APARD encouraged frank debate within the communities to

change key behaviours and attitudes. Currently the women in gender groups with whom APARD has worked are now able to participate and have influence in this process and know how many cows they are due to receive. While this may not seem a huge stride in dealing with gender equality from the bride's perspective, it is a big change in the Dinka culture.

APARD has also worked with religious leaders including the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Akot. The Bible is sometimes used to justify discrimination against women, for example saying the woman was formed from a man's rib so she should be subordinate to him. The Bishop attended one of the community meetings run by the gender group and stated men and women are equal before God. As a result many now consider gender equality sanctioned by their religious leaders.



*Elizabeth Atheve Photo: Richard Chilvers*

Elizabeth Atheve leads the Thong Piath Women's Group in Rumbek. She said: "Anything that can be done by men, women are also able to do and the other way round, even cooking. Men now go shopping for groceries. Women are now consulted on how money is spent or if a cow is to be sold. Getting food is a big problem for women – they have to find food for themselves and their family but being able to grow their own vegetables and then sell them is making a big difference. They are also making charcoal. It also makes a big difference being in a group of other women as they are able to support each other. Women are even building their own houses."

John Malith, executive director of APARD said: "Women were not noticed because of suppression and they didn't have the opportunity to stand before their communities. The problem is not the women, it is the men. But we don't just work with women, but with both men and women. We start at the livelihood level – how people can share life to make it more profitable for both men and women. We are proposing gender equality through income generation."

Another reason why they successfully challenged traditional gender beliefs was because the context of war brought increased poverty and people realised the need for change. People are also more mobile than they were, so were able to visit other communities for example Eastern Equatoria state where some women own shops and farm. There is also more inter-marriage which brings new ideas to the traditional Dinka culture.

### **3. When empowering women to express their views, support women who are already having a positive impact in their communities**

Susan Nadi Majaro, 38, is Executive Chief of Wulu Payam and a Paramount Chief for Wulu county which has a population of some 45,000. There is no other female paramount chief in Wulu and across South Sudan it is very rare. She has been in post since October 2013 and was elected by the community.

The issues she works on include:

- Domestic conflicts – for example if a man wants a divorce she investigates the situation to see why the relationship has broken down and how women can avoid being evicted from their homes.
- Women who are unable to find work or widows. She coaches them to help them find work as traders or growing vegetables
- Domestic abuse – much violence in the home stems from alcohol abuse by the husband. She will then investigate the story and discover the truth of the situation. She consults with both families.

Susan was supported by the other two executive chiefs of Wulu. Sila Mahammad Kon said: “The issue of women’s rights is a serious one in Dinka culture. We used to think women are subordinate to men, but this has now changed due to the awareness raising meetings run by APARD. Men and women are equal – anything a man can do, a woman can do. Women are doing a lot in domestic work and need to have the right to decide how the household spends its money. The community has come to accept Susan as a chief because they respect her voice and listen to her because she is good at resolving disputes.”

She also sits on the community court which hears around 10 to 15 cases a month involving domestic violence. The man can be fined or sent to prison for six months. Until her appointment, only men passed judgement and often this was seen to be discriminating against women and it caused a lot of discontent in the community. On South Sudan’s independence, 25% of all government appointments are meant to be women, but this is widely disregarded. Women still have no right to own property.



*Chief Majaro Photo: Richard Chilvers*

As a paramount chief, she also raises issues particular to women for example:

- Polygamy which has a big impact on women – she pushes for more rights for the women
- Girls going to school. In most classes, just 30% are girls and most leave school before gaining qualifications.

Susan added: “I’m motivated because women get left behind in poverty. Women here are not educated, they live hard lives and are dying because of poverty. Women die because they are poor and marginalised. I needed to speak out as we are all human beings and are supposed to be equal. Human beings shouldn’t be treated like dogs – we are of the same blood – the poverty of women in South Sudan is so great. I will do this until the suffering of women is no longer there and men see women on equal terms. I want to see this before I die.”

The APARD training included reaching out to traditional chiefs to mobilise them to support women’s sharing of household responsibilities.

#### **4. In peace mediation work, conduct thorough research into the context, involve all those concerned in the dispute, but limit the actual participants**

In Lakes state, cattle raiding is widespread and violent. Two Peace and Stability dialogues were held between the Matangai, Mayom and Malek communities. This brought about 90 participants (13 females and 77 males) drawn from different communities' cattle camps to Rumbek town for face-to-face dialogue. The two sides had not met together for talks for some five years until the CEPO initiative. Guong Akoldit is chief of Mayom Payam. He attended the peace and stability dialogues and said: "We agreed there was no benefit from the violence and agreed to end it and allow people to move freely between the two areas. We agreed to let the government resolve the issues, pursue those who are guilty and arrange compensation, rather than carrying out violence ourselves. We agreed to pursue forgiveness and to start a new page."

Matur, 28 is a leader of Mayom Payam youth. He said: "Other peace conferences bring together many people, but this was the first one that actually brought together the young people from the cattle camps who are carrying out the violence on the front line. The real youth who fight each other got involved and that's what made the difference. The process must continue and be expanded so it's taken to every village and cattle camp. The future for us is promising – since the dialogues people have never clashed and people are still friendly now. Some people have lost relatives and people need constant engagement so they can open a new page. Everyone's hurt is not the same."



*Matur, leader of Mayom Payam youth Photo: Richard Chilvers*

There was a lot of community consultation before the opposing sides met. They carried out a baseline workshop with participants from all five Payams of Rumbek county. This involved Payam

administrators, young people and women's leaders so they heard what the community wanted. People came up with solutions and focused on the youth from the cattle camps. They chose not to involve senior politicians as they felt they could have tried to make political capital out of the process, but only those directly involved. They also brought in the UN Mission to South Sudan who contributed t-shirts, helped with transport and gave a small grant to each Payam involved. They also did a mapping of key elders and administrators who would actually contribute to their aims. They took the risk of involving all those involved in actual violence despite the fear violence could even break out at the meeting. The key was to focus on the negative impacts of violence so that people's hearts began to change before they actually got down to dialogue. Another outcome was that after the process the community no longer protected those accused of violence. Once that happened, people actually even gave themselves up to the police because they knew that without their community's protection they would actually be in more danger.

CEPO's pilot site in Rumbek Centre was so widely respected the Government of South Sudan has now asked them to set up an Early Warning System to alert police so they can intervene. Staff at CEPO built trust in the young people living in the cattle camps, and devised a system where early signs of trouble could be identified. For example if young men were collecting water bottles and hanging them round their waists it means they are planning to go on a raid to a distant camp. The youth of the camps are given knowledge of how they can map potential threats from other youths and then report them to the police. The police then alert the leaders of the Payams and Bomas and local peace and justice committees made up of youth, women and elders. The WWS pilot has led to a Saferworld-funded project for many cattle camps.

## **5. Have solid risk management and power analysis that is constantly updated**

Every three months CEPO conducts a power analysis which they share with other CSOs and NGOs and parliamentarians for comment. They map institutions or individuals who are influential and who is supportive or unsupportive. They use this for particular interventions for example in peacebuilding or women's empowerment. They map allies who can potentially bring others to support the programme and strategies that can influence them. For example in a peace mediation around cattle raiding in Rumbek at first they involved all local and regional stakeholders at talks, but they found this was unproductive as people were afraid to speak openly in front of powerful people. On closer analysis, they found it was the youths themselves they needed to engage in the peace dialogues so changed their approach. They mix the power analysis with a risk management strategy to ensure they protect their staff and people they work with.

Dealing with the slow bureaucracy of state agencies is very time consuming and means partners are often not able to implement activities within the expected timeframes. One way CEPO mitigates this is to ensure they use their allies in local government to access decision makers.

## 6. Develop imaginative ways to sensitise communities to the change you want to see

SUTCO decided that making a film using local actors would be a good way to highlight the issues a community could face. They recruited actors in an open process and devised scenes where young people turned their lives around from drinking and gambling to working on and monitoring community development funds. Before the screenings, they invite local leaders to take part in a mapping workshop to share the needs they have so they can begin to devise possible solutions. They then show the film to the community and ask them to identify the issues they are facing and highlight how they can register to vote, and how they have a responsibility to protect the environment, have a right to health, education how they need to pay taxes and can demand accountability. They ask people what are the negative issues that stop the community participating in local government and to come up with possible solutions and work with them to devise an action plan.

APARD developed three radio talks which focused on men and women's roles in the household and in peace and security. A phone in radio show with the Catholic diocesan Good News Radio station explained the definition of gender and then encouraged listeners to phone in to express their views, leading to debates which challenged traditional roles.

CEPO did a week long learning exchange visit in January 2015 for nine politicians from Lakes state to Central Equatoria to learn about governance. The recommendations they came back with included realising the Lakes state government system was too complicated to enable decision making to happen effectively and that formal local revenues were not being collected by the state as defined by the Local Government Act. They devised a plan to change structures in Lakes state to ensure governance worked better.

## NOTES

### **Oxfam partners:**

CEPO Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation focuses on peace and conflict mitigation, human rights, rule of law, livelihood, governance and democratic transformation.

SUTCO Support the Children Organisation work on gender equality, child protection, youth empowerment, peacebuilding and community development

APARD African Partnership Aid Rehabilitation and Development focus on community-level conflict prevention and resolution in Lakes State as well as gender equality

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