



SUCCESS STORY

Talking to People about Peace

Sudanese people and traditional leaders learn about the peace process



Photo: USAID

The Chiefs and Traditional Leaders Conference attracted 350 people from every corner of Sudan.

SPLM leader Dr. John Garang said that the peace process would only be successful if the people owned the protocols. He asked traditional leaders to be his “disciples of peace” as they spread the word to their communities and villages.

A crucial part of the transition from war to peace is the initiation of democratic discussion among all Sudanese people. USAID has worked with key members the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) since June 2004 to disseminate information on the preliminary peace agreement in an effort to create an inclusive government and active citizens. The effort has reached more than 600,000 people.

The beginning of the program was dominated by large affairs, speeches—and few opportunities for interactive dialogue. As time went on, the SPLM members began to set up smaller meetings with community leaders and intellectuals to spur more intense, cooperative discussion. The program concluded with a Chiefs and Traditional Leaders Conference, which welcomed 350 kings, chiefs and traditional leaders from every corner of Sudan.

The two-week conference not only shared information on the peace agreement, but also helped build ownership and unity among the different groups. Talks covered a wide range of issues, including inter-tribal conflict, arms control, demining, the role of chiefs and traditional leaders, the rule of law, participatory democracy and development, and SPLM’s political organization and future. Every discussion was translated into English, Arabic, Nuer and Dinka, and every elder was given a chance to speak.

The traditional leaders unanimously endorsed the protocols of the peace agreement and called the conference a landmark for the people of New Sudan. They also emphasized the need to continue a dialogue that would create an enabling environment of forgiveness, reconciliation and unity. In return, the SPLM committed itself to holding an annual conference with the traditional leaders and conducting more interactive meetings with other key constituencies, such as women, youth and soldiers.

“This peace agreement will fundamentally change Sudan,” said SPLM leader Dr. John Garang. And with USAID’s support, that transformation has already begun.