

All Sudanese shall live in peace, freedom and harmony

Sudan

Civil society organisations and their engagement for human rights

DED development advisor Kerstin Kude-Osman and DED junior development advisor Eva Gutjahr spoke with Dr. Amna Rahma of *Women Empowerment for Peace and Development* (WEPD) and Mr Light Aganwa of *Sudanese Organisation for Nonviolence and Development* (SONAD).

How do WEPD and SONAD contribute to the improvement of human rights in Sudan?

Dr. Amna: We work with different groups towards improving economic rights through micro finance projects. However, education for women, the fight against violence against women through awareness raising and support for victims are also important on our agenda. We do publicity work and also bring these topics directly to our politicians.

Mr. Light: We offer workshops, i.e. civic education, voter education and gender. Our target groups are communities, religious and community leaders, students, and women. Through our training people learn to use nonviolence and conflict transformation in their daily lives. In February 2009, we also opened a Resource Centre for Nonviolence and Conflict Transformation.

What are the conditions for the peace process?

Mr. Light: Ours is an approach of non-violence in all kinds of conflicts – land rights, resources, culture and traditions or religion. We therefore talk directly to our politicians; dialogue is the only way forward. We live in a country with many religions and cultures. At SONAD, people from all regions of the country work together. That is a challenge as such, because long years of war and conflicts let grow distrust. However, what we all have in common is our nationality. We are all Sudanese. A second important issue is the interfaith dialogue. We encourage the dialogue with religious authorities all over the country.

Do you feel your work bears fruit?

Dr. Amna: I want to tell you a story from my work: Last year right before our important Islamic holiday, *Eid*, I was on a business trip in Waw in the south of the country. Flight connections inhibited me to be in Khartoum in time with my family to celebrate the holiday. It was a disaster for me; I have never been away from my family on *Eid*. I was in Waw and was sick at heart. A colleague from the local organisation invited me for dinner. When I arrived at his house, I was close to tears. This family, a non-Muslim family which I actually did not know at all, had

prepared an *Eid* feast for me as if I was at home in Khartoum. I will never forget this experience! We do have strong personal relations between North and South in this country. The problem of Sudan is politics and our bad international reputation, not the people in the North, East, South, or West.

In 2009, there will be elections in Sudan. How do you prepare for this event?

Dr. Amna: These elections will be held under very difficult circumstances: Voters do not know much about election processes. It is very complicated to fill in the ballot papers, as there will be elections on five political levels on one day. People fear that election processes may not be transparent and there will be a lot of inaccuracies. Furthermore, it is not clear if international observers can be present in sufficient constituencies.

What are you and your organisations doing to meet these challenges?

Dr. Amna: WEPD will distribute information on human rights. We will point out the political rights in the light of the upcoming elections and address particularly women. This strategy has proven itself: We reached to implement the women quota of 25 %. This is the heritage of the late Dr. John Garang de Mabior, the late president of the autonomous region of Southern Sudan and the First Vice President of Sudan. The International Women's Day on March 8th has been celebrated under the motto "Vote for her!"

Mr. Light: I think it is very important to prepare for what may happen after the election. We should much more think about how we as Sudanese will react on the election. An election can be fruitful for a process of democratisation, however it can also destabilise a country. SONAD will conduct a programme on the prevention of election violence during and after the upcoming elections. We think this is extremely important and wish this issue could gain more attention.

What is your vision for Sudan in 10 years' time?

Mr. Light: I hope for all people in Sudan that they will have the chance to live in peace, freedom and harmony – no matter in which region they live or which group and religion they belong to. That is what we want to reach in Sudan. In 10 years, I want to be proud to say, I am Sudanese. For me this includes that all Sudanese citizens can live in dignity, with all their human rights and access to the available resources.

Dr. Amna: Yes, we want to be proud of the results of our peace processes, the reduction of poverty and the mutual trust that we have built together. This holds for all Sudanese and all their international partners.

Kerstin Kude-Osman is a pedagogue and since 2008 development advisor for DED in Sudan.

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Info

WEPD is a network which has been founded in 1997 to include Sudanese women in the peace processes on all political levels. WEPD has 62 member institutions which it represents in a multitude of national and international forums. WEPD is also a member of the *Inter-Sudanese consultation group* for the support of the peace process and appears on international donor and women conferences.

http://www.insightonconflict.org/women_s_empowerment_for_peace_an/

SONAD is a Sudanese non-governmental organisation which was formed from supra-regional student groups at Juba University in the capital Khartoum in 1994. Nonviolence and dialogue are the mission of this NGO. SONAD works particularly with IDP to improve their living conditions through trainings and advocacy for non-violence and human rights.

<http://www.sonadsudan.org>

Image descriptions:

Light Aganwa: "I want to be proud to say I am Sudanese!" Photo: Eva Gutjahr

Dr. Amna Rahma: "We have strong personal relations between the South and the North of the country." Photo: Eva Gutjahr

Stand of Darfuri women on the International Women's Day. Photo: Eva Gutjahr