

THE BRIDGE

Mercy Corps Civil Society & Conflict
Management Team Newsletter
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Fostering Good Governance



Issue Overview

MC's definition of good governance ("the system and process of accountable, transparent, just, responsive and participatory governance") tells us what it means in the abstract, but does not tell us how we get there from the status quo, let alone how to ensure the practice of good governance is maintained once it has been achieved.

As we solicited articles from some of our country offices we asked authors to consider the following questions:

- How does your program define "good governance"?
- What aspects of the program indicate that it is a governance program?
- What were the primary objectives of the governance programs?
- What activities were undertaken? With whom? For whom?
- What tools were used? Which were particularly germane/useful?
- Who was the donor?

We hope their answers to these questions will provide staff throughout the agency with some information on the different approaches we take to fostering good governance.

Zynab Hussein writes about our cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Iraq, where our work evolved out of pilot projects with local schools and with support from the community and a local CSO. We saw that there was a demand for literacy amongst girls and women, and we developed a program that would help local institutions to meet that demand. Building this relationship has improved the accountability of schools to their communities, and the communities' opinion of and trust in local institutions.

Yohannes Wolday describes the project Facilitating Outreach to Rural Afghanistan (FORA), which involves the provision of trainings for staff members in the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The staff, who were employed in Mobile Village Development Teams (MVDTs), learned community mobilization and conflict resolution techniques that improved their ability to work with village committees in a participatory manner.

Michael Szporluk writes about the Training, Advocacy and Networking program in Guatemala and Mongolia. In Guatemala we've helped CSOs to join forces on matters of concern within their communities and we've helped build their capacity to be spokespersons for their communities in conversations with local government about making schools more accessible, better health care provision, mitigating land conflict and advocating for

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Cover: [Khashkot village: Government staff facilitating participatory decision making among communities.](#)
[Photo: Yohannes Wolday, Mercy Corps](#)

Issue Overview

greater women's involvement in local government. During their research on these issues, they have also improved their organizational skills and are thus better equipped to voice the concerns and demands of their constituents. In Mongolia we've facilitated the creation of working committees, comprising representatives from government and CSO, who meet to discuss matters of local issues and to devise appropriate responses and solutions in a cooperative manner. These committees have discussed policy planning and ways in which to ensure quality service delivery.

Ruth Allen reviews some of the achievements of the Municipal Infrastructure Support Initiative (MISI) in Kosovo. MISI has worked with local governments to be more responsive to the needs of all their constituents by establishing horizontal linkages between ethnic minority and majority community members, and by establishing vertical linkages between community members and local government officials. In this article, she draws the important link between the capacity to govern and the communities' involvement in and trust in governance. By helping the local government to be responsive to minorities, MISI has helped improve not only relations between community members and elected officials, but also between community members of different backgrounds.

Beth Rogers-Witte writes of the Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan (LINCS) program. LINCS began with a comprehensive assessment of the condition or state of civil society following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The assessment shed light on the need for government to involve civil society more as a way for ensuring peace and accountability. LINCS has sponsored the convening of community dialogues, through exchange visits and conferences, as a way of supporting the peace process. The exchange of information has helped CSO reps and government officials understand their roles in and responsibilities for ensuring peaceful co-existence. By raising awareness, we are helping to support marginalized groups and improve the delivery of services.

Sarah Chenven writes of our strategic partnerships with grassroots neighborhood associations. These partnerships evolved out of an initial emergency response program, and as such may provide lessons for future transitional programming. The Gulf Coast Recovery Program has forged partnerships with over one hundred local groups in the region around New Orleans, with the aim of helping to leverage support for those who are most active in revitalizing their neighborhoods.

Klemen Gamboa writes of efforts to promote agrarian policy reform, improve community relations and ensure just land distribution through the Tierras Land Conflict Program in Guatemala. Policy reform has been facilitated by building capacity of a professional association, providing technical assistance in dispute resolution and mediation, by undertaking land mapping exer-

cises, and by promoting constructive dialogue between institutions and community members.

A staff member in our LINCS program, **Peter Manyjal**, shared some thoughts on good governance with members of the civil society and conflict management team. Peter is already a role model for the youth with whom he works, and he aspires to a leadership position in the government or in church. He recognizes the challenges of governing – and understands the need for accountability, independence and transparency.

Finally we provide results from a survey of readers of the Bridge. We wanted to share these with a wider audience – and gain feedback as to whether we'd accurately captured your views on this newsletter. We will endeavor to make the changes that have been highlighted (more practical tools, more information on opportunities for training) in our subsequent issues.

These snapshots of our programs show a variety of approaches to facilitate good governance. Though the points of entry differ (sometimes we work more with CSOs to raise awareness or their capacity, other times we work primarily with improving the capacity of governmental officials and institutions, and some times we work simultaneously on both), the overarching objectives are the same: providing support for those actors in society who believe in the core principles of accountability, participation and peaceful change in order to ensure healthy and vibrant communities that are governed responsibly and justly.

The road to good governance is not easy. While it is possible to build staff capacity in local institutions, the challenge is to make sure that the changes are institutionalized, not individual. While it is possible to mobilize communities and CSOs to give voice to their needs, one needs to ensure the leaders of such movements are protected and that their lives are not endangered. It is necessary to devote more time to identifying, testing and sharing tools that different country offices have used to promote good governance, and to deepen our understanding of how best to strengthen inter-communal ties, as MISI demonstrated along ethnic lines, and to involve marginalized members (*women, people living in deep poverty, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, religious or ethnic minorities*) so they can gain the confidence and have the resources to participate fully in their communities.

One lesson that comes clearly through these articles is that good governance is not something that is achieved, but rather something for which we need to continue to strive, as we work with our partners abroad as well as at home.



Literacy Program Campaign for Women: Working with the Ministry of Education

By Zynab Hussein, Administration / Program Support Coordinator/Mercy Corps Iraq

"Education is the promise of progress, in every society, in every family."

- Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

Literacy Campaign for Women in Iraq

In Iraq, illiteracy is common among women, especially in rural areas, most notably among Shiite women of the south. For the most part, family poverty, social and religious sensitivities, along with a lack of emphasis on education, have contributed to the deterioration of women's position in society. Since the introduction of sanctions after the end of the Gulf war in 1991, school enrollment has declined, especially for females. Statistics have revealed that girls are more likely to leave school due to the rising insecurity during the last four years. For these reasons, women and girls remain underdeveloped, immobilized, and illiterate. This has led to the exacerbation of social and economic inequalities between the genders.

As the education of women has a tremendous impact not only on their own development, but also on their families and communities, Mercy Corps initiated a 3-month pilot literacy program campaign for women in the Maysan governorate in November 2005. The literacy initiative was based on community demands and was in cooperation with the local Department of Education (DoE). The program intended to impart basic literacy and numeracy skills. Initially, the program involved 57 teaching centers in both urban and rural areas of Maysan. Over 2750 women, a much higher number than expected, enrolled in the pilot

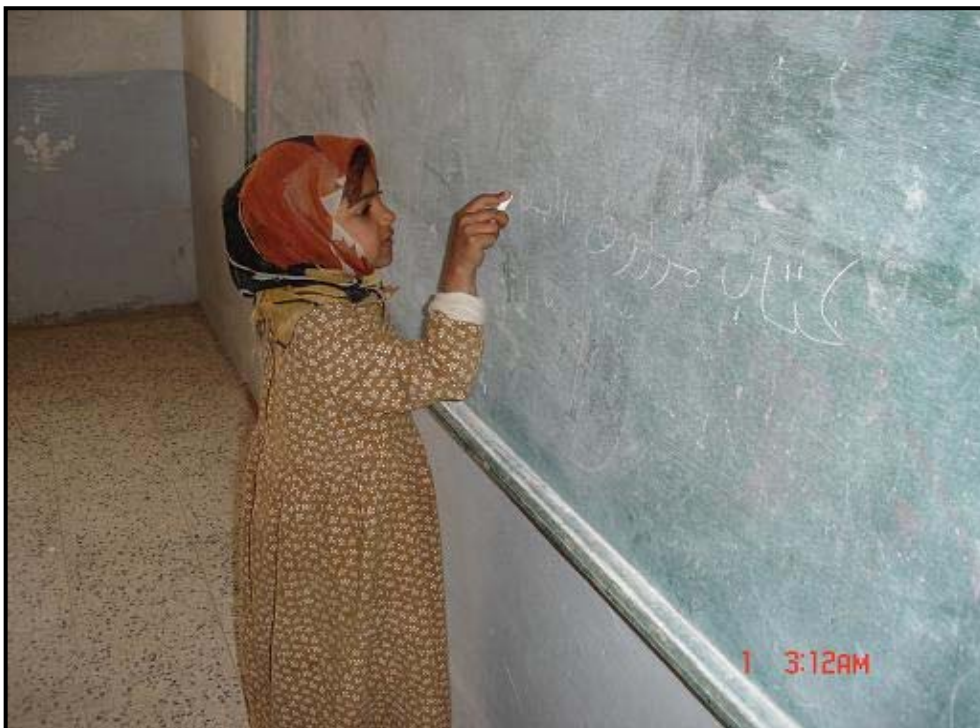
program and were taught by 126 previously unemployed female teachers.

To enrich the program Mercy Corps worked with a local CSO, the Al-Huda Institution, to organize seminars on Democracy and Human Rights, with special attention on women's rights, for 60 teachers of the program. The teachers would then pass along the lessons to their classes, many of whom were learning of these concepts for the first time.

Following the three month pilot, students were tested in both Arabic language and arithmetic. Approximately 90% of the women of the program achieved a passing grade.

After the success of the pilot program and given the broad level of community acceptance, Mercy Corps decided to design and implement an integrated full 6-month cycle of program lessons based on provisions of the Iraqi educational system's literacy programs. This program had two, six month stages. Following the successful completion of both the first "Foundation" stage and the second "Optimization"

stage, students would be able to enroll in the fourth grade of primary school. This change required Mercy Corps to implement the program in close cooperation with the Department of Education who evaluated the students' turnout and the performance levels of the program staff to better meet the objectives. A special team of monitors was also formed to oversee each center's activities on a weekly basis. To meet



New Learning Opportunities for Girls, (credit: MC Iraq Literacy Team Staff)

the new requirements, 57 additional teachers were hired, bringing the total to 183.

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Facilitating Outreach to Rural Areas (FORA) in Afghanistan

Facilitating Outreach to Rural Areas Program

by Yohannes E. Wolday, Manager, Staff Development and Organizational Learning, MC Afghanistan

Background - The Facilitating Outreach to Rural Areas (FORA) Program was a pilot project funded by the European Commission (EC) through the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH International Services (GTZ IS) under the Program for Alternative Livelihoods (PAL). FORA operated in 43 communities in the provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman, all situated in the Eastern region of Afghanistan. The program started on March 2006 and came to an end on April 2007.

Program purpose - FORA aimed at improving government-to-community linkages by building the capacity of Mobile Village Development Teams (MVDTs) which are the staff of Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). Mercy Corps supported MVDTs by coaching them in how to mobilize communities around their interests to identify and utilize local and other resources, and strengthen the linkage between the communities and the district-level administration. The MVDTs' mandate was to help communities find consensus while facilitating the drafting of Village Development Plans (VDPs) that serve as road maps for the holistic development of villages' natural, social and economic resources.

The primary objective of the program was to develop the knowledge and skills of 20 MRRD staff to promote and use conflict sensitive, community-based development approaches in 5 districts (covering 43 villages). The program had also the objective of mobilizing 43 communities to strengthen their social capital and ties, to make decisions that affect their lives and to use the public's own resources to promote the interests of their communities

The program and governance - The program seeks to improve the government to community relationship by bridging the gap between the government ministry and the community. The program also has the mandate of establishing and building the capacity of Village Development Committees (VDCs) in each of the participating 43 villages. The mandate of these VDCs was to serve as a bridge between communities and government, develop village development plans through a participatory decision mak-

ing process and raise funds for community prioritized projects.

Program success and implementation modalities - To date, the success of the program has to do with the training of 20 MVDT staff; the mobilization of 43 communities and formation and capacitating of 43 male and 18 female VDCs. Each VDC had between 9 – 15 members. Six to eight MVDT members worked on average for seven days with each community to identify local resources and priorities for village development. At the end of the mobilization process, government representatives worked with the community representatives, the VDCs, to develop their Village Development Plans (VDPs).

The mobilization process has been among the most successful achievement of the program. The success of the mobilization can be attributed to the following activities.

1. The MVDTs were well-trained (for over 2 months) both in the theory and practice of comprehensive community mobilization, including in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) tools, as well as in communication and facilitation skills.
2. Mercy Corps hired and trained staff to coach and support the MVDTs in their daily efforts of community mobilization. Mercy Corps' staff have been present over 75% of the time while the MVDTs mobilize communities. MC staff have organized debriefing sessions with them each day to draw lessons learned, and to identify challenges and areas of improvement. This has resulted in improved community mobilization and has provided hands-on training for the government staff.
3. The 20 MVDT members were divided into three teams, and each team spent 7 – 8 days with each community to create a good rapport with the community members and share experience and assess their situation. The prolonged involvement of MVDTs during the community mobilization process helped them to collect accurate information about villages, to reach out to wider communities, and to ensure meaningful community input into identification of needs and prioritization of projects. This has provided an opportunity for the government to conduct successful outreach and to bring the communities and the government closer to each other.

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Literacy Program Campaign in Iraq *(continued from page 4)*

As part of the educational authority contribution, the DoE offered the teachers a two-week intensive seminar in various teaching techniques to adequately meet the needs and learning capacity of participants in relation to age and educational background. Also, the DoE designed and distributed a teachers' manual to provide appropriate teaching techniques and methods for working with illiterate students.

The successful implementation of the Foundation stage in Maysan prompted the expansion of the campaign to other areas where Mercy Corps is working on the Community Action Program (CAP) in South and South Central Iraq, with a standardized curricula, as well as monitoring and evaluation techniques. Mercy Corps liter-



Inclusion of Girls and Women with Disabilities, (credit: MC Iraq Literacy Team Staff)

acy program designated focal points in the four governorates where Mercy Corps implements CAP began exchange visits and held meetings to gain knowledge, technical expertise and know-how to replicate the campaign in each governorate.

To date, over 8,000 women have attended lessons under the Mercy Corps literacy umbrella and 85% of the students who have already finished the second stage of the program in Maysan achieved passing grades. Mercy Corps now plans to expand the campaign to reach more isolated locations and to increase local ownership with the help of local Women's Associations and CSOs. In Basrah, Mercy Corps recently signed an agreement with the Firdaws Society for Women, making it the first Iraqi organization fully engaged in implementing the campaign. The specific effort also aims to build the capacity of local organizations through trainings and application of standardized logistics, monitoring, evaluation, finance and reporting techniques and material aid. Moreover, Mercy Corps' approach strengthens bonds and collaboration between regional governmental offices and CSOs. The transfer of knowledge and skills at the regional level is expected to reach and shape

regional and national patterns for the development of a civil society while promoting a new "dialogue" platform between the newly set up government, rights-based organizations and communities.

Building on its continued success, a third 9-month long "Preparatory stage" is under implementation for 1,265 women who have successfully completed the two previous stages in Maysan. According to ongoing negotiations with officials of the central Ministry of Education (MoE) in Baghdad, Mercy Corps (*with the support of officials from the local DoEs of the four governorates*) is working to "formalize" the literacy campaign to offer to students the opportunity to be included in the central examination system and to receive primary school certificates, should they pass. The new stage involves lessons in Arabic, Arithmetic, Science, Islamic Studies, History, Geography, and English. The local educational authorities are distributing books for the lessons and are providing classroom space in schools. In an agreement with the local DoE, the decision was made to use experienced teaching staff of the primary school level during the third stage. The teachers have the necessary teaching experience and capacity to implement the new advanced lessons of the Preparatory Stage. To facilitate the planning and communication with the central authority in Baghdad, Mercy Corps organizes quarterly literacy workshop meetings with local educational authorities from the four governorates. In the workshops, there are discussions on the cross-governorate standardization of monitoring and evaluation techniques and alternatives for extra-curricula activities.

Female students have expressed the advantages of their recently acquired skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Their new skills have an impact on their day-to-day life and facilitate understanding and coping mechanisms in life and social circles. They have started signing their name and read medical prescriptions, guidelines, newsletters, magazines and subtitles on TV movies. Many have said, "...we were blind and now we are able to open our eyes and



Employment Opportunity for unemployed teachers (credit: MC Iraq Literacy Team Staff)

Literacy Program Campaign in Iraq *(continued from previous page)*

see ...” In some other cases, women are now able to help their children do their homework.

Mercy Corps’ Literacy Campaign Program is the first step to fight women’s illiteracy in southern Iraq and to offer alternatives. The program aims to empower women during a new emerging era and to provide quality factors which support the enhancement of dignity and social acceptance for the individual. Women should be able to form social movements, promote gender related issues, voice concerns, improve in personal, cultural and physical development, sharing of information, understanding, self-confidence and self-esteem. They will also be able to cope with issues related to raising children, nutrition, hygiene, education and health. The Literacy Campaign Program for Women consists of unique and innovative elements which can “challenge” traditionally rooted perceptions on the role of women in Iraqi society.

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Discussions with Department of Education Officials,
(credit: MC Iraq Literacy Team Staff)

FORA *(con't from page 5)*

- The utilization of PRA and PLA tools has allowed community members to voice their views and share experiences among themselves and with government representatives. The following PRA/PLA tools, among others, were utilized during the community mobilization process: community sketch map, livelihoods mapping, problem tree or flow diagram, conflict graph, timeline, semi-structured interviews, problem and project analyses and prioritization matrixes. Besides data collection, the PRA/PLA meetings held at the end of each mobilization have also contributed to raise awareness among community members and have created a strong sense of ownership for the Village Development Plans.

Challenges during mobilization – One of the challenges in the community mobilization process was the lack of female mobilizers among the 20 MVDTs. In Afghanistan it is extremely difficult for male mobilizers to speak with women at their homes. Mercy Corps hired three female mobilizers, who were able to reach women in 18 communities. It has also been (and continue to be in Afghanistan) difficult for men and women to sit together to discuss their village matters and prioritize problems or projects. Therefore Mercy Corps mobilized men and women separately and the findings from each group were collated together at a later stage by the VDCs and MVDTs to develop comprehensive VDPs that incorporate both women’s and men’s views.

Another challenge has been the mobilization timing. It was difficult for community members to set aside an entire day during the mobilization as they were also busy in the field. As a result we decided that PRA/PLA sessions would only be held in the morning. This gave communities time to perform their daily activities and provided the MVDT to have adequate time to share and analyze findings and to make new plans.

A final and a long term challenge has been the need to follow through with project implementation in the communities. The VDPs have comprehensive information on village vision, situation, priority needs and a two year plan for development. The VDCs need to more experience to implement projects and to develop their management skills. Nevertheless, the community mobilization process helped communities to assess their natural, human and other resources, and to look for locally available solutions and for VDCs to produce their communities’ development plans and develop project applications.

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Building CSO - Govt. Relations with TAN

By Michael Szporluk, Sr. Program Officer, CSCM

The Training, Advocacy and Networking (TAN) program, funded by USAID, works in Guatemala and Mongolia on strengthening rural civil society through a variety of interventions.

In each country our third objective is to work toward improving communication and the working relationships between local government and civil society organizations (CSOs). In Guatemala this objective reads: “*Civic organizations form effective coalitions for cooperative advocacy in collaboration with local government and business.*” In Mongolia this objective reads: “*Rural public institutions increase support for the activities of civil society organizations in tangible ways.*” The emphasis, thus, has been a little different in each country.

In Guatemala we understood that the main obstacle was that the CSOs felt disenfranchised, unable to give voice to their concerns. Therefore, we’ve focused on supporting initiatives taken by CSOs in policy matters they are passionate about. Thus, we have helped coalitions organize around land conflict, improving educational programs and increasing attendance, better health care and greater women’s participation. Funds are used to help the coalitions research these topics, analyze findings, come to an agreement about recommended solutions, and mobilize support from other key actors.

In Mongolia we saw that the main obstacle was lack of information and understanding of civil society from the government’s point of view. Thus, our focus for this objective has been directed more toward the supply side of governance. We’ve supported research into procurement practices, worked with local officials to increase their understanding of the role of civil society and the benefit of working with civil society. Grants have been given to support pilot project cooperation between CSOs and local government institutions, specifically with the Department of Health and Department of Social Welfare. Feedback on the nature of the cooperation and results achieved has been very positive, both from representatives in those institutions and from the participating CSOs.

We believe that increased contact can build trust between CSOs and local institutions, and that cooperation is important not only in its own right, but also because it allows community members to form a more positive impression of CSOs and the government alike.

In terms of tools, in Guatemala we’ve conducted trainings to increase participants’ understanding of how to undertake advocacy campaigns (relationship mapping, trust-building exercises, problem identification) and provided guidance on working in coalitions (defining roles and responsibilities, communication systems and strategies).

In Mongolia, we’ve facilitated the formation of working committees, comprising govt. and CSO representatives, to act as standing bodies to ensure continued communication as well as to plan and oversee further cooperative activities.



Men and Women attending a community meeting in a classroom, (credit: Thatcher Cook, 2006)

We have not defined our own definition of “good governance”. Instead we have a broad understanding that good governance is the system and the process by which governing institutions are accountable and just. Within our understanding of accountability, we believe that institutions should be transparent and responsive by promoting participation from community members.

In closing, the TAN program has been able to promote better governance through different approaches and by using different tools. We believe that good governance is both a goal and also a means by which all members of society are able to ensure that decisions are made according to their wishes in a respectful, peaceful, accountable and just manner.

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Facilitating Linkages in Kosovo

Good Governance in Kosovo Ruth Allen, Sr. Program Officer

For this issue of the Bridge, we have taken an excerpt from "Lessons for Kosovo's Next Transition: an international NGO's Experience", written by Ruth Allen with Kosovo Mission Director Kristin Griffith and published in February 2007.

This excerpt covers some background information on our involvement in Kosovo and highlights one of the themes identified in the longer paper, the establishment and strengthening of **community and government** ties, which is directly connected to good governance. The other themes (building business by building peace, creating an environment conducive for minority returns, and maintaining an adaptable/flexible approach) and a full set of recommendations to policy makers and development actors are covered in the full article, which can be found on the web at <http://www.mercycorps.org/countries/kosovo>. Endnotes appear on page 13.

Mercy Corps' Experience in Kosovo

Mercy Corps¹ involvement in Kosovo began in 1993 and, prior to the NATO-led intervention, had expanded to include emergency relief programs in Peja/Pec, Mitrovica/Mitrovica and Prishtine/Pristina.² These programs included food and non-food distributions, capacity building of a local social service organization, agricultural extension and livestock support. Mercy Corps' programming throughout the Balkans³ provided the organization with a broad view of the significant changes sweeping the region. The organization's Kosovo-related operations expanded significantly in 1999, as it managed refugee camps and assisted in addressing the immediate needs of returning Kosovans once the conflict subsided. In the immediate post-conflict relief effort, Mercy Corps provided food and other emergency supplies to 200,000 people in western Kosovo, rehabilitated schools, improved the capacity of the health care sector, supported agriculture and livestock recovery, and provided grants to help small businesses.

Since the end of the conflict, Mercy Corps' programming has expanded into additional areas, including: economic development through microcredit provision; support to agriculture and veterinary services; improving basic services such as health, water, electricity and infrastructure; and sustainable reintegration of minority groups. These efforts emphasize meeting common needs to bridge ethnic divides, link civil society with government actors, and build the capacity and accountability of the Kosovan government, particularly local municipalities and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mercy Corps operates from a main office in Prishtine/Pristina and has five field offices located throughout Kosovo: Gracanice/Gracanica,

Prizren, Peja/Pec, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Zvecan/Zveqan.⁴ The evolution of Mercy Corps' work in Kosovo is grounded in what it has identified as critical to lasting, positive change through promoting economic sustainability and citizen engagement in local decision-making. Mercy Corps' work in Kosovo reflects the significant transitions that continue to shape the region.

Mercy Corps' framework for realizing the vision of "secure, productive and just communities" emphasizes the centrality of participation, accountability and peaceful change in developmental activities.⁵ An analysis of those Mercy Corps Kosovo programs with the explicit goal of peace, or stability and/or reconstruction to establish conditions for peace, reveals four specific themes that the organization found essential to achieving this goal. The first theme, the facilitation of vertical and horizontal linkages, is critical for promoting good governance.

The Importance of Facilitating Vertical and Horizontal Linkages

At the time of the NATO-lead intervention, social and political life in Kosovo was characterized by extreme polarization along ethnic lines. Following years of distrust, tension, and outright conflict with national authorities that left many Kosovan Albanians unable or unwilling to participate in governance activities or access state-sponsored social services, parallel systems emerged within the Kosovan Albanian community to meet basic needs in health, education and other areas. At the same time, civil interaction between Kosovan Serb and Albanian communities largely ground to a halt, with both populations increasingly seeking support and protection within their own ranks. The resulting bifurcation of Kosovan society reflected the pronounced disintegration of both *vertical linkages*, between government and its citizenry, and *horizontal linkages* among people of different backgrounds.

Together, horizontal and vertical linkages enable a society to build and maintain relations that promote accountable govern-

"This [MISI] helped us work together with Albanians and Serbians. Community involvement with both communities is the best way. Through this project, Serbian villagers feel like they are a part of Kosovo society and feel less isolated."

- Kosovan Serb Community Working Group member in Lagja Serbe/Sprska Mahal, Rahovec/Orahovac Municipality

ance, civic participation, and peaceful change. Horizontal linkages are vital to confidence and trust building among different ethnic and geographic groups, with business and civil society often playing a primary role in catalyzing and reinforcing such relations. Vertical linkages encourage responsible and responsive governance where authorities interact with communities through "top down and bottom up" relations. Essential to this process is the existence of an active and informed civil society that can serve as a constituency for both reform and stability, as well as transparent and accountable government.

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Facilitating Linkages in Kosovo (*con't from previous page*)

Absent such vertical relations in society, state and institution building efforts lack the means to connect to communities in ways that encourage competence in governance and confidence within the citizenry.

Through its work in Kosovo since the NATO-led intervention, Mercy Corps has sought to repair and strengthen linkages on both the horizontal and vertical axes. One program addressing this need is the Municipal Integration and Support Initiative (MISI). A US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded program launched in 2003, MISI uses an incentive-based approach to encourage and support municipal officials and other community leaders to take on driving roles in the process of minority returns and reintegration.⁶ The program operates in 16 of Kosovo's 30 municipalities and has established a network of community working groups to cooperate with municipal leaders on identifying and addressing needs related to return and reintegration. The emphasis on local leadership for these critical issues, rather than on the UN and other international actors, is laying the foundation for increased government responsibility. USAID has noted this effect stating "through the MISI program, USAID/Kosovo's tactic to include the municipalities and receiving communities as stakeholders in the returns/minority integration process is meeting with some success and resonating with other donors."⁷ Some of these donors are now asking grantees to include municipal government components in their own returns proposals.

A notable result of MISI is the feeling among all community working groups that they now have the ability to influence decisions and actions of the municipal government.⁸ Similarly, communities involved in MISI report stronger relations and more contacts with their municipalities and feel a greater sense of agency.⁹ From the municipalities' perspective, MISI has strengthened communication channels with community groups and increased their awareness of and faith in civil society groups as effective partners in addressing development, integration and other challenges.

In addition to enhancing vertical linkages, the community empowerment approach used in MISI has also shown signs of successfully expanding horizontal linkages and represents the only initiative in Kosovo currently implementing this dual level approach. Of particular importance has been the process itself, including the selection of municipalities, the establishment of full municipal buy-in, and the transparent identification of projects involving a wide spectrum of community members and local government officials.

Using infrastructure needs as the entry point for reestablishing or developing new linkages among groups, community driven approaches like MISI provide a low risk way for people to identify common interests that can help to bridge otherwise divisive issues between communities. As one community member from a multi-ethnic neighborhood in a city where MISI has been active says, "Were I to live here another 10 years, I am sure that without MISI I would not have had the chance to make these contacts with peo-

ple of different ethnicities in my neighborhood. We have made very good relationships with each other."¹⁰ Because co-existence alone cannot be assumed to result in reintegration or reconciliation, circumstances that require collaboration toward a shared goal can often be an excellent first step. By working together to conceptualize and implement joint solutions, communities begin to reestablish trust and relationships based on accountability, key factors in the creation of stable, productive communities.¹¹



Mixed Albanian and Serb participants identifying community priorities, (credit: Paul Jeffery, MC, 2004)

Priorities and Excerpted Recommendations¹²

Two overarching imperatives important for policy makers, development actors and government that, if not comprehensively addressed, will significantly undermine the prospects for Kosovo developing into a viable political, economic and social entity are thus:

- § **Prioritize competence in governance, administration, and social services** to meet the urgent and long-term needs of a diverse society, and
- § **Build confidence on the part of citizens of all backgrounds** that the government is capable and willing to provide equitable treatment and adequate security.

Actors concerned with Kosovo's development should evaluate the appropriateness and impact of their efforts in relation to how they support, or fail to support, these two fundamental priorities. Absent concerted action on these two fronts, Mercy Corps' experience indicates that the emergence in Kosovo of a viable political, economic and social entity is highly unlikely.

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Civil Society Reshaping the Future of Southern Sudan

By Beth Rogers-Witte, Deputy Program Manager, *with assistance from Marco Pfister (Deputy Program Manager – Kurmuk), Senada Kahriman (Capacity Building Advisor) and Jackie Gamble (Information Officer)*

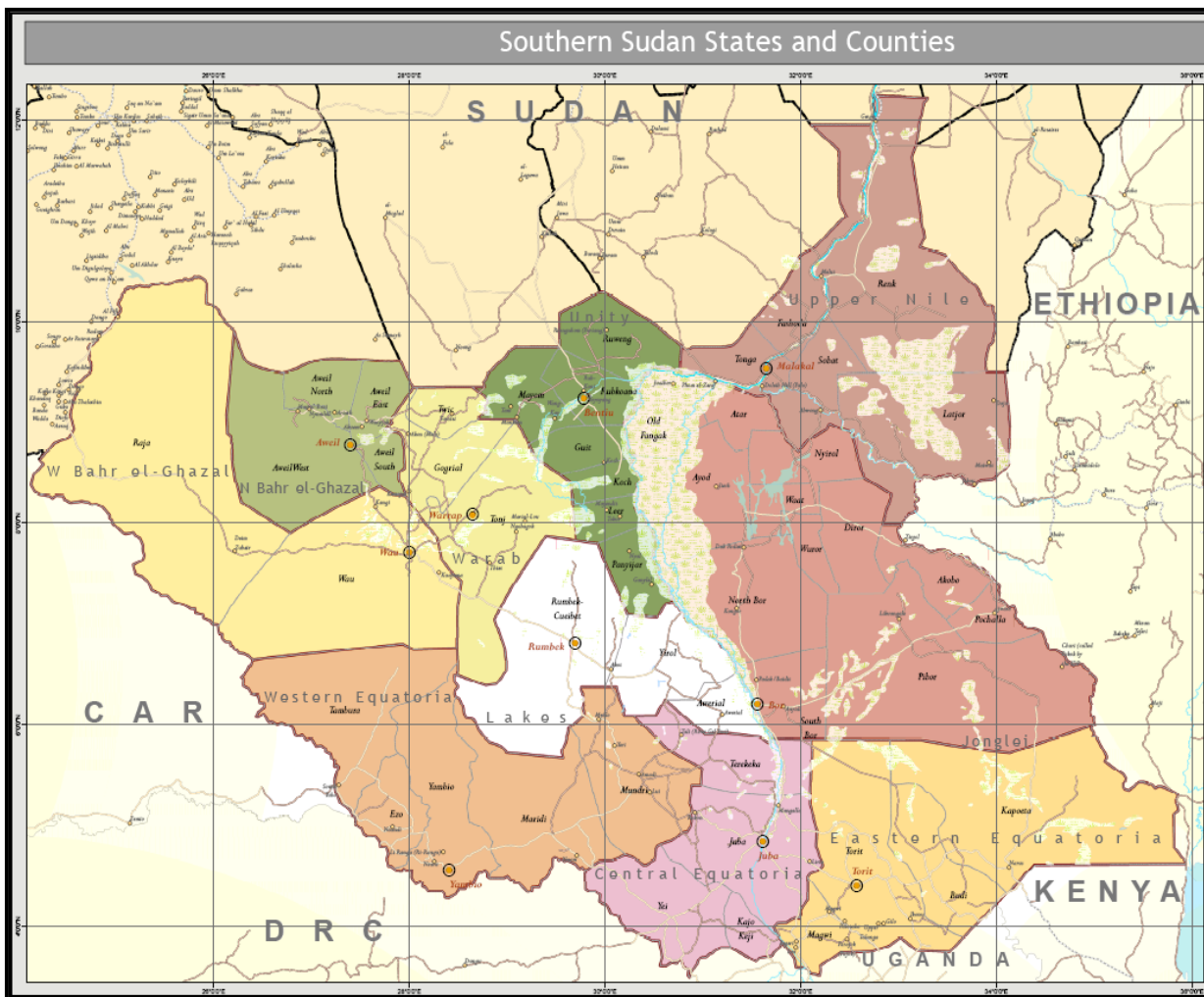
While the world’s attention remains focused on Darfur, the region of southern Sudan stands at a critical crossroads. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the 21 years of civil war in January 2005, the people of southern Sudan have been paving the way for development while struggling to solidify a yet-fragile peace. Whether a catalyst for, or the result of the Government of Southern Sudan’s (GoSS) recent anti-corruption campaign, discussions on good governance are taking place more regularly than ever before. It is through such discussions that members of southern Sudan’s emerging civil society are realizing that they have a crucial role to play in peace building at all levels of the decision-making process.

To avert conflict and contribute to southern Sudan’s peace building process, the Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan (LINCS) program, a three-year, USAID-funded initiative implemented by Mercy Corps and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), is partnering with local civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop their ability to advocate on behalf of marginalized groups and ultimately influence public policy. LINCS operates throughout southern Sudan and the so-called “Three Areas” of Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile State, and Abyei, which are contested areas between the North and South of Sudan.

At the start of the program, the LINCS team conducted an assessment to evaluate the state of civil society during the six-year interim period following the signing of the CPA. It was the first of its kind and scope in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas. The assessment discovered that while the nascent government is grappling with the challenges of setting up new systems through which to channel public services, civil society groups are stepping in to assist with basic needs provision at the local level. Because of their close contact to local communities, civil society organizations are well-positioned to influence public perception.

Though there is no reference to CSOs specifically in the CPA, there are many references to citizens and institutions working in partnership to promote understanding and more effectively deliver services.

CSOs not only have an interest in the success of the CPA, but also have a responsibility to ensure that the government upholds it. Specific references throughout the CPA are made to “ushering in an era of responsible, just, transparent, people-based and integrity-based government” (Power sharing protocol statement in the Preamble). The Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan



continued on page 12

LINCS—Sudan *(continued from previous page)*

Preamble also states regarding the duties of the Citizen include “to participate fully in the development of Southern Sudan”. Government leaders are beginning to recognize the roles of civil society organizations and the power they hold within communities and for accountability.

Dialogues constitute one of the key activities within the LINCS program designed to strengthen the voice of civil society at the decision-making table. Mercy Corps has facilitated three types of dialogues in all six LINCS regions across southern Sudan: CSO

networking dialogues, CSO-government networking dialogues, and issue-based dialogues. The first two types of dialogues focus on perceptions of the role of civil society, civil society’s contributions in rebuilding communities, and how civil society organizations can collectively impact public policy. The issue-based

dialogues, on the other hand, involve CSOs who are active in promoting and supporting vulnerable groups such as youth, orphans, widows, disabled persons and IDPs. The objective of this these dialogues is to improve consensus among CSOs representing marginalized groups, increase knowledge sharing and improve service delivery. This particular dialogue (occurring every quarter throughout the program in each LINCS-operated region) is more targeted in terms of coming up with tangible discussion topics and action points instead of simply providing a forum for CSOs to network with one another.

Both civil society and the government are struggling to understand their respective roles in peace time. Across the life of the program, there has been a significant change in the mindset of civil society mem-

bers towards interactions with the government, attributed to LINCS opening a forum for discussion. Participants express that they feel more empowered in the public arena as a result of the dialogue with government officials. As one woman from Leer County described, “It was the first time that ladies are allowed to discuss freely in a public forum. Previously, women have only been invited to sit and listen to the government discussions. Now women have an opportunity to express themselves freely to powerful people in the community and to take part in dialogues on issues affecting them.”



Members of civil society participate in a training about the implementation and progress of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Kurmuk, Blue Nile State (credit: MC LINCS Staff).

In addition to facilitating dialogue, LINCS has also hosted a series of civil society conferences that bring together representatives from CSOs from across southern Sudan and the Three Areas. The conferences allow civil society members to feel connected to a wider movement. Participants exchange ideas, build upon lessons learned and network with one another at the regional level. One conference participant, a member of the Government of Southern Sudan’s HIV/AIDS Commission, Dr. Rondyang James said, “In the entire history of southern

Sudan, we have not had the chance to come together like in this conference, particularly with people from the Three Areas. People died so that we could have this opportunity to sit and discuss... the LINCS exchanges are the first of their kind.”

In the southern Sudanese context, LINCS partners still face many challenges in their efforts to develop equitable and sustainable communities. Government structures are still new and very loosely defined, and there remains significant overlap between traditional, customary, modern and militarized forms of governance. In this context CSOs are often perceived to exist simply to

fill gaps in provision of basic services and are often not recognized for their ability to advocate for changes in public policy. Through LINCS dialogues and exchange conferences, this perception is changing for the better and, in the process,

LINCS Civil Society Exchange Visits

August 2006 – Kurmuk, Blue Nile State
“Discovering and Celebrating Diversity”

December 2006 – Yei, Central Equatoria State
“Strengthening Voices for Community Action”

April 2007 – Malual Kon, Northern Bahr-El-Ghazal State
“Building Coalitions through Civil Society Partnerships”

LINCS—Sudan *(Continued from previous page)*

contributing significantly to lasting peace.

Communities are taking ownership of these dialogues. By providing skills through trainings, issuing small grants and offering a forum for discussion amongst civil society members, LINCS is setting the stage for positive impact. In each region where dialogues occur, civil society members have already established loosely formed “Dialogue Committees”, where groups of people are now coming together to network with one another and discuss issues outside of LINCS-sponsored events. In terms of the conferences, or civil society exchanges, there are lasting impacts from having people from varying regions and varying tribes throughout southern Sudan come together to discuss civil society and learn from each other. The conferences allow for deep and meaningful friendships and relationships, which are not only contributing to the overall peace in the region, but also adding to local peace and development within each area.



Participants of one of LINCS' Civil Society Exchange Conferences list actively engaged in discussions and trainings about capacity building and civil society in Kurmuk, Blue Nile State, August 2006 (credit: Beth Rogers –Witte, MC Staff)

For further information about Mercy Corps' LINCS program in Southern Sudan, please contact:
Veena Sampathkumar at vsampathkumar@mercycorpsfield.org.

Kosovo End Notes (from Article on pages 9 –10)

1. Mercy Corps receives funding from a variety of sources, including the US Agency for International Development (USAID), DFID and other European governments and private foundations.
2. See Appendix 1, map of Kosovo municipalities.
3. Mercy Corps was also operating programs in Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia at that time.
4. The main office and three of the field offices are located in Albanian majority areas, while the two remaining field offices are in Serbian majority areas.
5. See the Mercy Corps “Vision for Change” framework (Appendix 2 in the full report).
6. The focus of the program in northern Kosovo has been adapted due to the specificities of the area. While it endeavors to bring together local government and communities to address infrastructure needs, it lacks an active return component.
7. Catherine Balsis, Marcia Greenberg, and Liz McKeon. May 2004. “Building Diversity: An Action Plan for Integrating Gender, Youth and Ethnicity into the USAID/Kosovo Program”. Mercy Corps study.
8. Sara Aviel. December 2005. “Evaluation of Community and Government Engagement under the Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI).” Mercy Corps study.
9. Ibid
10. Personal Interview with Mercy Corps-Kosovo national staff member. 8 October 2006.
11. Mercy Corps has also worked on strengthening horizontal linkages within mono-ethnic communities by providing such communities the tools they need to collectively advocate to local government to ensure local needs are addressed. In the current transitional environment, with citizen concerns about government corruption, lack of funding, and capacity, empowering communities to generate their own resources and to work in partnership with government is a major priority.
12. For a complete set of priorities recommendations, please see the full article at: <http://www.mercycorps.org/countries/kosovo>

Grassroots Efforts to Strengthen Governance in New Orleans

By Sarah Chenven, Sr. Program Officer, Gulf Coast Hurricane Recovery Program

“Mercy Corps was the first to step to the plate and support the neighborhoods. They were there for us when nobody else was. They are fabulous partners who truly care about the common good, and they have helped empower us to be all we strive to be for our residents and our community.”

-Hal Roark, Broadmoor Neighborhood partner

On August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, causing one of the largest natural disasters in U.S. history, scattering more than 750,000 people around the country and killing at least 1,800. The hurricane destroyed 275,000 homes and wreaked more than \$100 billion in economic and physical losses. Eighty percent of the city of New Orleans flooded, and the world watched in horror as the American government at all levels – city, state and federal – failed its citizens.

Mercy Corps responded within days of Katrina’s landfall. The sheer magnitude of the devastation, and the shocking similarities between the hurricane’s impact on survivors and the impact of natural disaster and conflict on those with whom Mercy Corps works in developing countries compelled the agency to action. Mercy Corps donors rallied and millions were raised from individuals and corporations - the majority from the Pacific Northwest - within weeks. In Katrina’s immediate aftermath, Mercy Corps provided emergency relief supplies to more 100,000 people throughout the Gulf Coast and awarded close to half a million dollars in grants to social service agencies responding to the region’s immediate needs. rapid, proactive approach to disbursing funds prompted the Aspen Institute to call Mercy Corps and our colleague agencies “one bright spot” in an otherwise dim emergency response.

Calling on our extensive experience working with communities recovering from disaster, ***Mercy Corps has built partnerships with over 100 local groups throughout the Gulf Coast***, and is committed to bringing more resources to the region in a transparent and responsible manner. Today, we continue to work alongside Hurricane Katrina survivors. In New Orleans we apply the primary lesson we have learned from other efforts around the globe: that disaster survivors are the best agents of their own recovery.

The situation in New Orleans to this day remains grave; over half the city’s population has not and cannot yet return. One of our key – and most successful – programs supports the

revitalization of neighborhoods – by those who are committed to building back responsibly. Mercy Corps helps residents reclaim, rebuild and revitalize their own neighborhoods by encouraging good governance practices on two levels: throughout the city as a collective whole by promoting public, private and civic linkages and within individual civic organizations that are leading the recovery charge.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *“an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.”* Good governance is the combination of a number of democratic principles, including participation, rule of law, accountability, and an open and uncorrupted process, working in tandem on such decisions that affect the lives of the communities and the livelihoods of their residents. Mercy Corps neighborhood revitalization strategy in New Orleans involves coordinating with local partners on the ground to respond to their post-Katrina needs by providing technical support that promotes sustainable structures representing the interests of returning residents, and grants participating neighborhood associations badly needed seed funds to implement community projects.



One of the many devastated streets in the Lower Ninth Ward, months after the hurricane (credit: MC NOLA staff,

For over a year, Mercy Corps has engaged in strategic partnerships with five different neighborhood associations: the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, the Lower 9th Ward Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association (NENA), the Central City Partnership, the Central City Renaissance Alliance and the Broadmoor Improvement Association.

New Orleans (con't from page 14)

Our Community Development staff also fosters a growing collaboration among these civic groups to encourage information sharing and teamwork between target neighborhoods. To help ensure sustainability, we have also funding a coalition of neighborhood associations known as the Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN), whose mission is to formalize a system of connective tissue between related neighborhood organizations post-Katrina. By supporting projects in devastated areas such as a recovery resource center, a civic engagement center, a community library, and collaborative youth programming, we are promoting good governance as a recovery model. Community partners have identified these and other projects that play a critical role in representing the needs of returning residents and evacuees still living in what New Orleanians refer to as the "Diaspora." Reaching out to public and private potential partners, but depending on themselves to lead their own recovery, MC neighborhood partner projects encourage wide-scale participation and focus on the process of solution-oriented outcomes. In addition to seeding such projects, facilitating access to technical assistance and capacity building initiatives for the community-based organizations, Mercy Corps also ensures that good governance policies are lived out by those organizations in practice.

...



Community Member Receives Land Title, (credit: MC Guatemala staff)

Promoting Land Tenure

Promoting just land tenure and agrarian policy through civil society engagement, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

Klemen Gamboa, Coordinator, Advocacy and Public Education, TIERRAS

The Mercy Corps TIERRAS Land Conflict Resolution and Economic Development Program commenced with the USAID-funded project "Promoting Peaceful Solutions to Conflict in Alta Verapaz" in 2003. At that time the program's components included land conflict resolution using mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and capacity-building of our local partner JADE (Association of Jurors for Legal Development). The strategy to work in close coordination was a success, and the involvement of civil society and active participation from all sectors were vitally important (CBOs and rights organizations, religious institutions, municipal government, business associations).

Significant political advocacy efforts were made for agrarian reforms and for the promotion of public education to strengthen a culture of peace in the post-conflict context (Guatemala signed peace accords to end its 36-year civil war in 1996). These initiatives were undertaken with the recognition that economic development is vitally important and must occur to increase incomes and improve the quality of life of communities that have gained access to land through land conflict mediation.

In 2004 the project, together with multi-sector participation, carried out a land conflict mapping exercise/assessment, which identified the existence of 406 land conflicts in Alta Verapaz alone. In 2006 a follow-up land conflict assessment to update data was completed. This follow-up identified a total of 574 land conflicts, representing a 29% increase in cases. Despite the rise in the overall number of land conflicts, it is important to highlight that violence and protests have diminished substantially from previous years. Though conflict is inherent in human beings, lasting positive change can occur and conflicts can be resolved through constructive mechanisms for dialogue promoted by organizations such as JADE, The Ministry of Agriculture (SAA) and the judicial centers for mediation.

Dialogue is at the center of a public education campaign promoted by the TIERRAS program. TIERRAS has used multiple kinds of media, such as radio and television, to emphasize that dialogue is an effective means to resolve conflict. Conflicts, and specifically land conflicts, have structural causes. One of the central factors for these conflicts has been the continued highly unequal land distribution among the population. Guatemala registers

Tierras Program: Promoting Land Tenure (cont from previous page)

0.84% on the GINI index, 58% of the wealth is in the hands of just 2% of the population. The Human Development Index for the department of Alta Verapaz is 0.46 (the lowest in the country), and the lack of public policy for resolving land issues, among others, compounds the problem. The agrarian and land tenure situation needs to be analyzed and re-thought in Guatemala in a way that visualizes change, and involves and favors *all* sectors. The TIERRAS program supports civil society's engagement in the processes and their proposed solutions, which should be incorporated in coordination with political parties and then be operationalized by government in the form of clear policies to improve the functioning agrarian institutions.

To support the democratic process in Guatemala, it has been essential to facilitate dialogue between sectors, and to provide integrated solutions for the structural land tenure issues, which had been a primary cause of the internal armed conflict. It is important to recall that the polarization of positions has made it even more challenging to arrive at solutions. Dialogue between sectors and the ability to arrive at solutions through consensus – bearing in mind the relations between the state, society and the power inequality – are processes that have been strengthened by the work of TIERRAS. In 2004, in coordination with the Departmental Development Board (CODEDEAV), three multi-sector fora were organized, after which the representatives from the sectors met to coordinate follow-up actions on the process. This led to the formation of the Tierras Multi-Sector Coordinating Body of Alta Vera Paz (CMTierras), which now serves as a permanent public forum, at which various sectors and the public sphere (NGOs, GOs, academia, international organizations, civil society and community organizations) can consider, analyze, and make proposals to influence local politics and public policy to minimize and transform land conflicts in Alta Verapaz.

The TIERRAS program has been supported and strengthened by CM TIERRAS' advocacy activities during the past two years. Results have included the consolidation and strengthening of the public sphere, human capital, and knowledge about political advocacy, as well as the completion of various proposals developed from the facilitated constructive communication between sectors. Another important result of the advocacy component has been the formulation of proposals for changes in public policies, and support for programs to minimize conflict. This departmental advocacy strategy has the following aims: 1) to ensure the implementation of the recently passed law that established a central Cadastral Information Registry, 2) to promote the establishment of agrarian courts, 3) to communicate the need for the creation of land regularization and tenancy law, 4) to create a government rural development policy based in law, 5) to establish a local land conflict information clearinghouse to support peaceful governance in the department, and 6) to

strengthen, over the long term, the balance of power so that society is more inclusive and democratic. These initial activities should be sustained over time through the use of participatory advocacy methodologies.

In 2007, with the support from the TIERRAS program and funding from USAID and Development Cooperation Ireland, important activities have been implemented as part of the political advocacy program. These have included: (1) the organization of the 8th Multi-sector forum on land regularization; (2) a forum, at the national level, on judicial certitude of land tenure in protected areas emphasizing the Mayan cosmo-vision; (3) participation in the development of rural development law by a wide range of social organizations. The TIERRAS program will continue to strengthen CMTierras, primarily by consolidating participation with higher levels of responsibility and commitment from stakeholders. The TIERRAS program and the political advocacy and public education component have ramifications at the national level, but it is also necessary to have policies in place at the departmental level (*of Alta Verapaz*) that contribute to the decentralization of the state and that can minimize and transform the local problems of land conflict, tenure insecurity and the lack of effective agrarian policy. However, commitments from key political actors are needed to create a stronger and more democratic state.



Community Mobilization for Land Tenure Advocacy, (credit: MC Guatemala staff)

Interview with Peter Manyjal: LINC'S in S. Sudan



Peter gearing up for a community soccer match (credit: Michaela Ledesma, 2007)

Peter Manyjal is a Small Projects Officer for the LINC'S (Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan) project and up-and-coming community leader. Born in Blue Nile State, Peter started out studying Arabic. Then the civil war broke out and, at his uncle's behest, he joined the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) while still in his early teens. After seven years Peter's unit was disarmed, and his life took a different direction. He attended school in the Bonga Refugee Camp, then attained his teacher certification and worked for the Ethiopian government. After four years of teaching and later working in the capacity of teacher's supervisor, he was sponsored to attend a religious studies course in southern Ethiopia. Another staff member identified and recruited Peter to the LINC'S team, which appealed to him because of the concrete computer and financial skills training he could obtain. In his year and a half with Mercy Corps, Peter has become known for his excellent community mobilization skills, infectious sense of humor, and unwavering commitment to promoting peace in Sudan.

1. What are your personal and professional goals for the future?

I would like to be a leader in the government or church. If I do not succeed in the position of a leader, I will be a teacher in school or church.

2. What motivates these goals?

In addition to my own feelings of motivation, I get motivated each time I have the opportunity to discuss important issues with other community members and leaders. Some people have even told me that I have the talent of leadership. In doing so, they also selected me to work in more than one place.

3. Who are your inspirational role models and why?

One of the college directors, my uncle, and my nephew. When I saw the college director holding a different position, I asked myself why I could not do the same in the future. My uncle used to tell me that to be a good leader, you should love people.

4. What qualities do you think make a good leader?

- i. Knowing what you are doing.
- ii. Listening to people.
- iii. Committed to the work.
- iv. Being humble.
- v. Sharing your opinions and experience.
- vi. Working closer to the community.
- vii. Transparency
- viii. Visionary
- ix. Advisor
- x. Lover of people
- xi. Delegating

6. Do you have any fears about becoming a leader? If so, what are your fears?

Yes, because some people may be jealous of me. I will not simply do what other community members tell me to do.

7. What does "good governance" mean to you?

It is important to be concerned about people and their needs. Good governance means accepting mistakes, seeking advice from different people, being independent, and allowing transparency and delegation. A good structure and staff know their responsibilities and roles. There should be no corruption.

Continued on next page

Interview with Peter Manyal:

BRIDGE Readership Survey

8. If you became a leader, how would you contribute to creating good governance?

I would work much closer with the staff. I would make a place for people to visit, give comments, and evaluate my work and give feedback on what I have been doing. I would not value my position more than the implementation of the activities.

It is important not to ignore people's ideas and to consult some elderly people in the community before taking action.

I want to work as a friend of the staff rather than as a boss. I would have annual, monthly, and weekly planning. It's important to be flexible, to delegate, to visit different areas, and to address the communities. Finally, I would try hard to avoid corruption through transparency and accountability, by being honest and open. I would not favor a certain group of people—a relative or friend, for example.

9. What do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges for Southern Sudanese leaders since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)?

Opportunities include working together with someone you fought for many years. Leaders can talk about democracy, freedom, equality, and the rights of communities and citizens. They can even talk more about the importance of peace.

Working together with someone you fought for many years is a challenge, too. The leadership positions are new. There are other challenges like bringing development to the south, avoiding corruption, maintaining peace, and bringing different people to the a higher level of understanding of different cultures.

10. What issues do you think are most important in the minds of the people? How are these issues being addressed?

Many people want to live in peace. Some people do not expect more war, and some are thinking that peace is not going to last too long. Since the signing of the CPA, some think there has been no development or full implementation of the CPA.

11. What other comments would you like to share with readers of The Bridge?

I am very interested to learn about good governance. I am glad to hear about this edition, which is focusing on the theme of governance. I would like to know more about this program because good governance is one of my favorite topics.

In the 1 April and 13 April issues of the *Globe*, the CSCM team advertised a survey on readership of the **Bridge**. We would like to thank the twenty six persons who responded to this anonymous survey. This brief article provides an overview and analysis of their responses.

We asked a few questions to determine who responded to the survey. From the 24 people who provided demographic information, we learned that twelve respondents worked at one of the HQs. The rest of respondents were spread among the various field offices (three in the Balkans, two a piece in Latin and Central America, in South Asia, and Southeast Asia). In terms of the length of employment at MC, twelve have been with MC for two or more years, eight have been with MC for between 1-6 months, two have been with MC between 7 – 12 months, and two have been here between 1 – 2 years).

Twenty two responses were recorded for the question: “do you know about the **Bridge**?” and fourteen persons answered in the affirmative, while six persons answered in the negative, and two were unsure.

Continued on next page



Peter watching an exhibition by Mercy Corps' local partner, Kurmuk New Youth Sports Association, (credit: Michaela Ledesma, 2007)

For more information about LINCS and Mercy Corps' other projects in southern Sudan, please contact Country Representative Richard Haselwood at rhaselwood@mercycorpsfield.org. If you would like to nominate yourself or a colleague to be profiled in an upcoming edition of *The Bridge*, please contact Michael Szporluk at mszporluk@mercycorps.org.

BRIDGE Readership Survey (con't from previous page)

We asked people about their understanding of the purpose of the **Bridge**, their views both about what the purpose *is* as well as what the purpose of the **Bridge** *should* be. It appears that people believe that organizational learning should be added (or should replace Information sharing) as the purpose of this publication. This suggests that the CSCM team and the Org Learning team may want to discuss how to adapt the topics and articles to reflect this view.

Primary purpose of the bridge	It is ¹ ...	It should be...
Public relations	12 % (2 of 17)	11% (2 of 18)
Information sharing	65% (11 of 17)	28 % (5 of 18)
Organizational learning	47% (8 of 17)	50% (9 of 18)
Not sure	24% (4 of 17)	11 % (2 of 18)
Other	6% (1 of 17)	0%

In terms of where people see the **Bridge**: 74% have looked at hardcopies in the office; 40% view it on the digital library, and 26% people have accessed it on the internet.

With regard to how often people read it, 24% read every issue, 30% read it occasionally, 30% read it rarely, and 18% never read it.

The final closed-ended questions concerned the quality of topics and articles. The following responses showed that vast majority people believe the articles are well-written and that most of the topics are interesting. It is quite impressive that no one gave negative answers to these questions.

Quality of topics and articles	Are topics interesting?	Are articles well-written?
Yes	43%	69%
No	0%	0%
Sometimes	57%	30%

In addition to the multiple choice questions, we had three open-ended questions in which we solicited feedback on how to make the **Bridge** more interesting and useful for our readers. The questions and responses in full are as follows:

Those who do not read the **Bridge** were asked why they didn't read it. 54% stated they didn't know about the **Bridge**, 15% said they don't have access; another 15% stated they didn't have time to read it. Three persons filled in "other" responses, including:

(1) didn't know where an electronic copy could be obtained; (2) didn't see hardcopies; (3) not a priority.

Two questions sought readers' recommendations on content.

	What topics/themes do you think should be covered?
1	Programme updates from around the world covering broader topics than civil society so that we share lessons across countries compiled into one resource. We have too many newsletters: The Globe, the Healthy Globe, the Bridge, the CSCM newsletter...
2	1. Participatory management of natural resources. 2. Building community capacity to prepare for disasters and affects from climate change. 3. Society's responsibility in reducing carbon footprint. 4. Strengthening civil society in communities with a heavy influx of IDPs/ refugees.
3	NGO Structure and it's principal Practical Civil Society Tips on Sustainable projects
4	More information on municipal (city and county government) development- How to, contacts, manuals, etc. How to use civil society (techniques) to make major changes in country laws, election laws access to transparency in government
5	conflict and development transition
6	link between economic development and civil society

	What would make the newsletter more interesting or helpful for your work?
1	It could incorporate latest news from the sector and issues that MC staff worldwide should be aware of...not just notes from the our MC world.
2	If there were some budget available for translating the Bridge to Spanish, Russian and perhaps Arabic, it could serve a much wider audience.
3	Guide on fund raising Links to skill development trainings
4	Unfortunately, not sure, since I believe I've only read one issue - that on youth programming.
5	Perhaps more case studies on "how to" go about making changes using civil society, etc

Respondents thus feel it would be useful to have more practical tools ("how to" guides) and tips as well as opportunities for trainings and contacts, and not just information about MC programming. This buttresses the view that a more proactive organizational learning agenda be incorporated into the content of each issue.