

Border observation Report

Community Empowerment for Progress Organization-CEPO

South Sudan and Sudan Borders

BORDER REPORT

Acknowledgement

Community Empowerment for Progress Organization-CEPO would like to acknowledge the commitment of the eight border observers from both South Sudan and Sudan. Additionally, appreciation also goes to the border communities' members who were involved in giving information to our observers at the borders and CEPO urge them to keep on their sincerity and cooperation in giving the accurate information to our observers. CEPO also would like to value some of the state authorities from both South Sudan and Sudan for their cooperation and collaboration in allowing the observers to have some access to key government institutions for confirming and cross checking information.

Thanks for everyone that have participated in making this report successful

Introduction

This brief report on the borders is within CEPO activity of the border observation. CEPO is engaged on campaign for soft border between Sudan and South Sudan since early this year under funding from Comprehensive Peace agreement Evaluation commission. The campaign started by with soft border workshops for civil society organizations in Juba and Khartoum early this year. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to create a culture of harmonious co-existence between the borders communities of both states (South Sudan and Sudan).

The methodology/activities of the observation

1. Conducting key informants interviews with randomly selected persons from the trading community, religious leaders, chiefs, women and youths.
2. Conducting informal open discussions with the public randomly
3. Observing the move of the two state authorities in both states border communities areas
4. Following communities/state authorities press release or official statements

Rationale of the assessment

1. The primary principles underlying this exercise were the lobby and advocacy for peaceful co-existence among the border communities of South Sudan and Sudan.
2. Observation of the states government roles and duties in ensuring harmonious co-existence or fueling conflict/violence in the borders.
3. The question which encouraged this study “Will independence of South Sudan divide Sudanese communities which have co-existed for over decades”? This makes Community Empowerment for progress organization-CEPO to intervene by conducting soft borders campaign and exercise of border observation.

KEY FINDINGS

1- Trading between the borders communities of the two states

CEPO observers witnessed that the Sudan and South Sudan borders are opened but the trading activity between the communities in the two states is not going on normally in the border areas of Northern Bahr el Ghazal-Aweil, Upper Nile, Unity states of South Sudan and the Sudan state of White Nile. Some positive development of the trading was registered for the month of October, evident by the flow of food commodities and other goods to Wau town of South Sudan in Western Bahr el Ghazal state. On a negative note, Upper Nile and Unity states of South Sudan are witnessing hinders from Sudan borders authorities mainly security personnel. The impact of low trading has affected Lakes State of South Sudan this is justified by rapid increase prices of food commodities and other goods.

1.1- Borders communities members perspectives

The members of the border communities appreciated the move done by the two state governments for opening the borders, especially in the areas of Northern Bahr el Ghazal in South Sudan and White Nile state of Sudan. While the borders communities of Unity and Upper Nile states in South Sudan are demanding more to be done to free the borders trading. According to the borders communities in Upper Nile and Unity states of South Sudan and White Nile state of Sudan, they are worry that Khartoum seems (an allegation) to be in connection with the militias of George Athor and some remaining elements of South Sudan Liberation Movement.

Additionally, both borders states communities expressed concern that the issue of Abyei disputes resolution has directly impacted negatively on the borders operation and that it has fueled the

friction between the two states over the oil interest. In relation to Unity and Upper Nile states, the issue of Hegiliz as well as the issue of Kaka towns' ownership is growing within the circles of National Congress Party-NCP with an intention of overrunning the oil fields in South Sudan in order to create a room of agreement over oil sharing.

2- Position of the army of the two states

Since international borders is an affair of army concern for the protection of the country citizens' lives, property and state integrity, both state armies are strongly engaged in the border disputes. They have regular military statements regarding to the borders disputes. Observed by CEPO onlookers that the military population at the borders are increasing following the recent statements issued by Sudan army force on October 14, 2011 (Khartoum) that, they will not withdraw troops from Abyei unless the deal signed with South Sudan on managing the hotly-contested region is fully implemented. Same statement was made by Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

2.1- Community members' perspectives

Majority of the community members in Abyei are fearing that the two states government may go back to war following their statements regarding the demilitarization and implementation of Addis Ababa's agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of Abyei Area provides for the redeployment of SAF and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), recently re-named South Sudan Armed Forces (SSAF), from Abyei immediately after that of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in the region. Community members in Abyei said they have witnessed SPLA withdrawal but Sudan army force are still present in Abyei town with rapid increase of troops, some troops came in the name of traders, police and others as civilians. Some community members from both Messiryah and Dinka Nyok revealed to CEPO observers that SAF/NCP is mobilizing Messiryah for occupation of Abyei and even beyond to some areas of far north of Abiememon county in Unity state especially during the period of migration for cattle grazing in the South Sudan.

3- Political position of the two states

The ruling parties in the governments of the two states are running the borders issues with less involvement of the borders communities members. The worse scenario is where the running

parties mixed their political differences with the border disputes management. For instance, NCP is treating Abyei as risk zone for allowing its opposition to use for military purpose since it is in military engagement with the transitional areas. The political parties have great influence on the processes of the demilitarization of the borders simply because both political parties owned the army.

3.1- Community member's perspectives

Borders communities informed our observers that at least the SPLM have express political will for mitigating the borders disputes. While NCP have a game of connecting the situation of the borders with the current disputes on the transitional areas political processes which have resulted to rebellion. Majority of the communities' members from both states believed that intervention of the international community is the only way that will make NCP to commit itself to non-violent resolution of Abyei disputes and the borders demarcation. Messirhay leaders (who demanded his name not to mentioned) said NCP is creating for them hard time to co-exist peaceful with the Dinka Nyok. He added that some elements in the NCP are speaking about facilitation of terrorist work or what he termed as "massive killing of Dinka Nyok" with the purpose of displacing them for permanent occupation of Abyei north area. CEPO observer questioned him "What is their own role in managing this risk posted on them"? he responded that for them as Messirhay, they are divided by NCP politics of divide and rule, this policy has made their community members who want power to be easily giving up for NCP policy due to access to money or power.

4- Community member's opinions on UNISAF

CEPO observers were informed by the communities' members from both states that, they have low belief, confidence and trust on the UNISAF role in mitigating the Abyei disputes. Majority of the communities' members used the example of UNMID role in Darfur in relation to NCP strategy of overcoming United Nation mission in resolving disputes in Sudan. One community youth member from Dinka Nyok described UNISAF as "tooth less lion that even a goat can play with, because the goat knew the lion cannot bide". While a Messirhay woman said she has fear if UNISAF become hard on NCP, Khartoum might plan to attack UNISAF as they did in Darfur for United Nation Intervention. Additionally, there are voices that some neighboring counties are

transferring their frictions into South Sudan by involving in fuelling the borders conflict through supplying arms to wrong hands. The main voices about this are heard mainly in the border areas of Unity and Upper Nile states. According to CEPO, the question of political mandate for the UNISAF's role in Abyei is critical from the citizens' point of view. The citizens feel that UNISAF is doing nothing because they did see UNISAF getting engaged in political intervention. The citizens view the role of UNISAF separated from the AUHIP totally, the aspect of complementary between UNISAF and AUHIP is not realized by the grass-root people.

CHALLENGES FACED

1. A lot of time is required for both getting and confirming information accuracy with the border communities members
2. The communities' members are so sensitive and reserved in giving information or answering questions
3. There are limited financial resources for running the program effectively in terms of having enough number of observers for covering the observation exercise broadly. CEPO was able to mitigate those challenges by changing the strategy of the observation from time to time. The only challenging thing is financing big observation for the observation

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

1. There is need for AUHIP and UNISAF to bring NCP and SPLM on continuous negotiation table on the borders issues/disputes
2. The international community should exert pressure on both NCP and SPLM to allow chance for peace to prevail at the border by making sure that implementation of Addis Ababa's agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of Abyei Area
3. There is need for NCP to honor agreements that were reached with the SPLM
4. There is need for Messirhay and Dinka Nyok to distant themselves from the politics of the two states regarding the borders management
5. There is need for AUHIP and UNISAF to have some deliberations with the grass-root members of Dinka Nyok and Messirhay to make them feel that their voices are heard by the

intervening institutions and realization of complementary aspect between AUHIP and UNISAF.

CONCLUSION

The idea of soft borders should be worked for by various stakeholders for ensuring peaceful co-existence between the border community's members. CEPO is working in the area of observation and reporting the situation analysis of the borders. Besides the challenges CEPO is facing with the work of the soft border concept, CEPO is committed to do the work regularly. Here CEPO is welcomes for any donor who has interest in funding the soft borders work between South Sudan and Sudan.