

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement(CPA) and Cultural Diversity in the Sudan

Dr Idriss Salim El Hassan *

Introduction

The issue of cultural diversity has been in recent years at the heart of local, regional and international debates relating to peace, development, democratization process, human rights and citizenship. This has further been heightened by the current globalization processes which have to a great extent removed the barriers separating the local and the international though the advancement of science, communication and transport technology, and the massive, world economic and political transformations. The latter developments have impacted the cultures of developing countries and their peoples in the same way their economic and political setups have been affected. It is important to note here that culture has become central in understanding the social dynamics and processes of sustainable development after long periods of domination of economic modes of analysis .In this regard special emphasis is paid to the issues of cultural conflicts and the actual role played by culture in conflict situations. The present paper discusses these issues with reference to the case of Sudan.

Sudan is a highly culturally- diversified society. However, cultural regions and cultural groups in parts other than central Sudan have not had the opportunity to develop to such an extent of being able to contribute significantly to Sudanese culture at the national level There is no state cultural policy per se so far to address the problem . This poses a challenge not for cultural management only but also for the democratic process as well. For a conflict-ridden country like the Sudan, cultural issues are of paramount importance to attain stability and development during and after conflict resolution processes. In so far as cultural rights are inseparable from defining the identity of a group or community, there is a close link between the claims made by different cultural groups in the Sudan and issues of wealth and power sharing. Many of the armed and non-armed conflicts in various parts of the Sudan now expressed in racial, ethnic and regional terms have a strong cultural component.



The above unbalanced cultural situation is in fact concomitant with the unequal socio-economic development which has characterized the country as a whole since its independence in 1956 resulted in a series of conflicts, some of which were violent. The main underlying causes of these conflicts are varied but they include demand for economic, political, legal, religious, social, and cultural equality; competition over natural resources; resistance of racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination (Gore, n.d.in Eltayeb Haj Ateya Cultural Liberty in a diverse Sudan Khartoum; Solo Printing and Publishing) Cultural Liberty in an a Diverse Sudan). However, the long war - and in fact the longest in Africa- that took place in the Sudan between the North and the South (1955-2005) could be seen as one expression of refusing all those forms of marginalization (Ali A/Gadir). After huge losses of material and human resources and destruction of productive bases and infrastructure the two fighting parties, the government of Northern Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) agreed to stop the war and embark on an alternative track of a peaceful political solution. The resultant agreement – Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) - is regarded by many as not good only for rectifying the North/South relations but also a blue-print for reconstructing the whole Sudan's economic, social and political life. However, this paper will limit itself to looking into how the CPA addresses the issues of cultural diversity (pluralism), cultural policy, and cultural management as key elements for stability in Sudan's post- conflict stage. This will be discussed within Sudan's socio-historical context as a background. The paper's argument is augmented by perspectives gained from local debates, sociological and other theories, and contributions made by the UNDP and UNESCO forums and publications (UNDP Reports 2004; UNESCO, 2001; 2003: and 2005).

Culture, Cultural diversity, and Cultural Pluralism

Since its coinage by Taylor in the 19th century and up to the present, the concept of culture has the subject of many, sometimes muddled, understandings, interpretations and analyses at the theoretical level. There is, however, a general understanding among the scholars that that through culture human beings have separated themselves from nature and, thus, have become in control of their own destiny in so far as not being under its hegemony like other creatures. It involves how humans perceive themselves as individuals, their social relations with the others, and their relation to the natural and super natural worlds. The totality of the



representations of these worlds and the way they are moulded in certain forms of expressions, and which are later reflected in concrete modes of behaviour and practice, are bounded by the socio-economic contexts in which they exist. Thus, culture encompasses all aspects of humans thought and knowledges, values and beliefs, behaviour, social organization, institutions, material and immaterial production and practices (e.g. when performing customs, traditions and rituals). It is dynamic and always in the process of the making while dialectical and multidimensional at the same time. Therefore, it can serve as a source of inspiration, creativity, mobilization and resistance, but it can also be a tool for ideological and political repression and domination as well. Cultures do not operate in a vacuum; they are susceptible to political, social and development transformations internally, and to external forces of significant magnitude. For all this, culture has become of importance in recent debates on identity (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious etc.), human rights- specially among minorities and disadvantaged groups), sustainable development and citizenship in relation to matters of freedoms and equality; specially in vulnerability and conflict situations.

In many cases the terms “cultural diversity” and ‘cultural pluralism” have been used synonymously. But, more recently, experts differentiate between them as follows ”The notion of cultural diversity [is] addressed as a fact or feature , while the notion of pluralism [is] addressed as a policy mediated response in taking up the challenges inherent in cultural diversity and as a reality resulting from the constructive behaviour of individuals and groups in multicultural situations” (UNESCO, 2007:15 -Meeting of experts ?Final Communiqué Mainstreaming Principles of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Policies for Sustainable Development). There is a risk in overemphasizing diversity and underestimating cultural commonalities as this could lead to “ghettoization” or isolated “cultural enclaves”. Similarity of cultures, shared cultural values, cultural interdependence, interaction and dialogue are in fact a condition for human existence.

The notion of pluralism denotes several meanings depending on the discipline using it and its historical etymology. However, in most of modern social sciences, pluralism points to existence of varied cultural, ethnic and political groups who coexist in a multicultural situation where they compete in a free and democratic way. The concept of pluralism in this sense has two limits the fist of which is absolute dictatorship, unitary domination and



monopoly of power by one group or vision; the second is absolute freedom, fragmentation and complete relativism.

Derived from the above is that diversity actually precedes pluralism which allows for a just and equitable participation, and stemming from the values of positive tolerance while having as its target attainment of sustainable development. The outcome of the interacting diversity elements in a free society, if given equal chances of competition, would expectedly be harmonious and at least conflict free.

The latter discussion raises some questions about the relationship between cultural diversity, cultural pluralism and societal cohesion: what type of pluralism leads to a more cohesive society and opens the door wide open for creativity and development? And when and under what circumstances does diversity end up in a fragmented and broken society? And what is the role of cultural policy, cultural management, establishment of cultural institutions and use of appropriate mechanisms in converting diversity into a positive force for social solidarity and creation of a truly pluralistic society.

Some scholars believe that plural societies are more capable of dealing with conflicts than those which are not because : a) they provide more options for solutions to societal problems; b) knowing others' cultures and their richness leads to modesty and eliminates the sense of superiority; c) in turn the former position acknowledges that no culture is better than the others , and hence entertaining that it should dominate because it offers the only best vision that should be the yardstick for others will be abandoned; c) mutual respect and acceptance by the interacting cultural groups would create a conducive environment for peaceful coexistence (Barth).

Relationship between Culture and Identity

The massive literature on identity in the past years is a reflection of the significance scholars accord to the role culture plays in giving individuals and groups a unique sense of being which impacts all aspects of their social interaction in general and the political in particular. The increasing number of identity confrontations worldwide whether appearing as regional, tribal, religious or ethnic conflicts always have a driving cultural component. Identities, like diversity, as features only remain largely neutral until they are fuelled by culture under conditions of inequality, suppression, and domination leading to feelings of injustice and



humiliation. Expressions of resistance to such situations could be peaceful or violent; in either case culture is always present.

Any of the cultural symbols relating to race, kinship, religion, language, history, place ...etc could be utilized and molded individually or together into “imagined “ identities to claim their social, political, economic and cultural rights. The success or otherwise of such pursuits hinges on the nature of the group in question and the dynamics that govern its operations within the given socio-economic context; relationship, strength and dynamism of other interacting identities in the same arena ; the nature and weights of all the components of the whole society and the way they influence one another; and ,finally, the legitimacy of state in power and the kind of hegemony or democracy with which it executes its authority over the constituent parts of that society. In other words, cultural pluralism requires a very complex type of societal analysis vertically and horizontally at all levels, and including all relevant dimensions and elements of interacting identity groups. More specifically, the analysis should take into consideration two sides: one, the processes dimension (group, social and cultural dynamics); and, two, the structural dimension (mainly the political and economic contexts). Needless to say this has to be seen through a historical perspective.

The Case of Sudan

The complex socio-cultural reality in the Sudan is the product of the interrelationship between place (geography, physical environment), time (history) and humans. Throughout history, the Sudan has witnessed the coming and passing of various forms of empires, kingdoms and other types of governing entities; waves of migrant groups and stocks with different languages, religions, beliefs , customs and other cultural characteristics; and multiplicities of modes of livelihoods. At present the Sudan lies in the sahelian belt with environmental conditions ranging from deserts in the north, Mediterranean climate in the north east and Jebel Marra in Darfur, savanna in the middle and forests in the south; the landscape is dotted by ranges of mountains in the ease, northeast, west and the South. Livelihoods vary between farming, agro-Pastoralism, camel and cattle nomadism, transhumance and fishing. Islam and Arabic are the most widespread cultural aspects in the Sudan, however, Christianity and traditional religions and tribal, ethnic and linguistic groups have a considerable presence among Sudanese in the North, East, West and South. Though one admits that there may be



some sort of overlap, between the geographical / environmental location, tribal or ethnic background and distribution of any of the mentioned elements, yet there is no Complete congruence between them. Nevertheless, some scholars divided the Sudan into seven cultural regions in their attempts to carve out a composite of identities (Beshir). Their identity model, however, as some recent studies show, does not tally with what goes on the ground at the grass- root level where resistance to structural political and economic marginalization (laid down by the British colonial rule and sustained by the post-independence national regimes) turned into armed conflicts in Darfur, the East and Southern Sudan. The North / South war resembled the climax of identity confrontation epitomized in Arab / African dichotomy which , according to the CPA , can end up in political separation of the two parts (CPA, 2005). Unlike Darfur or Eastern Sudan, where the identity question is more complicated by the presence of an intermixture of Arab-claiming tribal groups, population in South Sudan have persistently rejected any Arab cultural identity. Use of English and tribal languages (including pigeon Arabic- called Juba language), Christianity and traditional religions (though there a high percentage of Muslims) customs and traditions, as well as differences in social structures (e.g. family and kinship) – all these are taken to be sufficient cultural basis (added to the legacy of slave trade) for demanding identity that has to be provided for constitutionally if Sudan is to remain united. (Deng; Khalid). Whether Sudan breaks up or continues to be unitary the fact remains that such provisions are implicitly stated and, moreover, wait to be translated into policies, plans , programs and activities. At present neither the Sudan Government, nor the SPLA has a cultural vision to accommodate and implement such issues.

Cultural Provisions in the CPA

The peace agreement signed on May 26, 2004, consists of six protocols covering: Machakos general framework of guiding principles; security arrangements; power sharing; wealth sharing; resolution of conflict in the states of Southern Kurdofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile; and, finally, resolution of conflict in the contested (between North and South) area of Abyei. The agreements are political and legal expressions of conflict settlement arrangements to achieve socio-economic development of a united Sudan based on equality, justice, non-discrimination and non-marginalization. If this does not work out as agreed (according to the



Southerners) the agreement gives the right of self-determination—with the possibility of succession – to Southern Sudan.

The peace agreement between the GOS (Government of Sudan) and the SPLA/M is unique in many ways compared to other similar conflict situations. On the one hand, the GOS by no means represents a united North (as there are many military and political opposition factions), nor does the SPLA/M for the South (there are numerous political bodies not in agreement with SPLM; also there exist 32 military militias not all of them with the SPLA). Nor is the agreement an outcome of victory by one of the two contenders; but it is in fact a result of the common understanding of the two parties that the conflict cannot be won in the battle-field and that the cost has been very high for both of them in many respects. In the cases of, for example, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Congo, the ruling military and political systems completely collapsed at the hands of ‘rebels’. Hence, the GOS/SPLA/M agreement is a compromise of positions applying the principle of give and take, under regional and, most importantly, international pressures led by the USA to achieve peaceful resolution. Both sides are still under extreme external, regional and international pressures to finalize its implementation successfully.

Since the ultimate objective of the SPLA/M – at least during Garang’s life (died August 2005) - is to achieve full sustainable development in all marginalized areas of Sudan the agreement is not focusing on political or security (military) issues only. Power sharing, especially in running the legislative, executive, and judiciary systems, therefore, occupies an important position in the protocols. In contrast, the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement was primarily concerned with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the Anya Nya fighting groups, in regional government and symbolic representation at the national political level. The present Naivasha protocol on power sharing stipulates that the SPLM (and its nominees) participate at both levels of government, the national and in the South, as a full partner of the National Congress Party(the ruling party) in the North. Implementation of the accords in general and partaking in the power sharing in particular assumes a strong and capable political and public service system which will as well ensure securing the social and cultural rights of the marginalized. It is known that it is not possible to attain high standards of sustainable development without a well-founded, well-institutionalized, and harmonious bureaucratic



system and observing citizens' human and cultural rights especially in 'post' conflict situations.

The protocols are, thus, propositioned on the complete restructuring of the executive, legislative and judiciary systems at all levels of government. It is intended that more powers and capacities be given to the states and local governments in all issues except sovereignty matters (even these have been largely minimized through curtailing the powers of the president and the relevant ministers/ministries). There shall be four levels of government national government: government of South Sudan, state governments, and local governments. Also, there will be a national assembly (parliament) and council of states (with representatives of states) and South Sudan Council. Besides the national constitution (to be based on matters agreed upon in the protocols) every state will have its own constitution that should not be in opposition to the national one. Many commissions and committees have been envisaged to deal with matters mostly tackled by ministries then, e.g., natural resources, land, public service, etc. Equitable and fair representation of people of South Sudan and other states of North Sudan in the commissions and other modalities should also include members of civil society as well. Apart from a special commission which is set aside for protecting the rights of non-Muslims in Khartoum which will be governed by Islamic laws, no other commissions were mentioned to cater for human and cultural rights. The powers of the ministry which was responsible for cultural affairs in the past were reduced by making it a ministry for " Culture, Youths and Sports" all in one (ElHassan, 2008).

In the CPA body itself direct or indirect reference to cultural matters and the issues that relate to it are provided . Religion occupies a prominent position in the agreement: part A article 1.4 states that " religion, customs and traditions are a source of moral strength and inspiration for the Sudanese people"; 1.5.1 says the two parties agree to "[Establish] a democratic system of governance taking account of the cultural, ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic diversity and gender equality of the people of the Sudan". Whereas part C on state and religion starts by affirming that "Sudan is a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual country and that religion shall not be used as a divisive factor". This is further reiterated in 6.1 which proclaims that "... religions, customs and beliefs are a source of moral strength and inspiration for the Sudanese people". Article 6.2 guarantees "freedom of



belief, worship and conscience for followers of all religions or beliefs or customs and no one shall be discriminated against on such grounds”. In 6.3 citizenship , and not any other affiliation, is regarded as the basis for eligibility for public office, including the presidency, and public service; also, “the enjoyment of all rights and duties shall be based on citizenship and not on religion, beliefs or customs.” Article 6.4 affirms that “[a]ll personal and family matters including marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession and affiliation may be governed by the personal laws (including Sharia or other religious laws, customs or traditions) of those concerned.”

Other cultural aspects in the CPA include traditions and customs (especially those relating to religion, land tenure and social practices- e.g. drinking and dancing), gender, race or origin, language, family matters, cultural heritage and artifacts. All indigenous languages are regarded as national languages and should not be discriminated against in education (particularly in higher education), law courts or bureaucracy at all levels of government. In particular, cultural diversity of all Sudan people was given a special consideration in terms of respect and protection by all state institutions and laws at all levels of government (federal, state and local). Moreover, the CPA stipulates that it is not enough only to respect and protect cultural diversity, but also this has to be reflected in the procedures and actions to be carried out by the relevant government bodies.

In part V of the CPA the modalities tables deal with cultural issues such as intellectual property, museums, national heritage sites, communication systems (table A); table C states that state authorities have control over state’s land and resources as well as all matters pertaining to culture, organizing religious aspects, registration of births and deaths, adoption, primary and secondary schools, cultural places (e.g. libraries, museums, historical sites), traditions, customary laws, historical monuments, entertainment, and sports.

Respect of social and cultural rights is emphasized in CPA. Those pertaining specially to religion were given a special consideration. For example, article 6.5. includes rights to : worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief and to establish and maintain places for these purposes; make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief; write, issue and disseminate relevant publications ; solicit and receive financial and other contributions from individuals and institutions; observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in



accordance with the precepts of one's religious beliefs; not to be subject to discrimination by the National Government, state, institutions, group of persons or person on grounds of religion or other beliefs. Other rights mentioned in the CPA cover those of life, personal liberty, freedom of expression, and equality before the law, freedom to move and assemble, and freedom from discrimination, rights of the minority groups, and women and children.

All the above rights , especially those of religion, shall be safeguarded by the constitution (as the supreme law); legislative system (parliament) ; legal system; bureaucratic machinery; and political framework of governance. Needless to say that this state of affairs is envisaged to take place within a democratically elected and set up political system characterized by good governance. The CPA goes into minute details of how each one of these structures is to be established, its constitution, functions and mode of operation to ensure its efficiency and justice on carrying out its tasks. The standards set to govern these matters should be made in such a way that expresses both diversity and unity of the Sudanese people at the same time.

In the section devoted to human rights and basic freedoms stated above the two parties declare their pledge to comply with the international and African treaties and conventions in this regard such as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the international Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention of the Child, African Charter on Human and People's Rights ...etc. Moreover, the Republic of the Sudan should ratify all human rights treaties it has already signed. A Human Rights Commission will be established to monitor the human rights and freedoms alluded to.

The Capital, Khartoum, is taken in the CPA to be a place where many people of the Sudan reside and hence it is a hub for diverse social and cultural traditions and practices . As such it requires being particularly sensitive towards those diversities. Tolerance is thought of in the CPA to be one of the guiding principles and basis of co-existence for Sudanese people to accommodate their practices in cultural, religious and traditions variations especially those of non-Muslims or those coming from regions or cultural areas other than central or northern Sudan. In fact Khartoum is envisaged to be a symbol of national unity “ that reflects the diversity of Sudan”. Social and cultural freedoms and rights are to be respected by all and enforced by the legal and executive systems of the government of Khartoum state and guided



by the principles of understanding and leniency. To protect the aforementioned rights and freedoms a commission will be established and will be accountable to the Presidency (the President and his two Vice- presidents) .

All of the provisions above have been included in the Interim Constitutions of the Sudan particularly those relating to freedoms and individual and collective rights. The preamble reiterates cognizance of the existing religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversities in the Sudan. It also confirms the commitment to establish a decentralized, democratic system that respects values of justice, equality, and preservation of human dignity. Special emphasis, among other things, is devoted to social justice and responsibility of the state to realize, promote and encourage all cultural matters and ensures that no individual Sudanese is to be discriminated against regarding participation and freedom of expression in all cultural activities whether social, creative, or entertainment. The Interim Constitution copies all the articles in the protocols as discussed above.

As could be seen from the above, the CPA and the Interim Constitution do generally cover many cultural issues in terms of values, religions, traditions, practices, languages, and arts; as well as protection of basic rights and freedoms of individuals, groups and institutions (State and social- e.g. the family); participation and expression ; tangible and intangible heritage and products and their protection.

However, we note two remarks here: a) the agreements are between two parties , the Government of Sudan and SPLA/M and not with other parties in the Sudan as whole; and that b) the articles concern freedoms, rights and protection and not mechanisms of implementation . In other words, the cultural issues are taken as a matter of diversity and not pluralism, which implies not treating them as a process that requires continuous monitoring and intervention; or that they need to be managed. Under the lack of a well- envisioned cultural policy and system of culture management it is, , as will be shown, not probable that Sudanese cultural and identity problems will not be adequately tackled. For, as long as there are no integrated cultural institutions that work with well-set plans within an agreed upon cultural policy and derived from an accepted national strategy, all attempts will be futile.



Institutions and Modalities of Cultural Diversity Policy and Management

Though there are many governmental and non-governmental organs that are involved in the area of cultural activity none of them has clear cultural policy guidelines; nor do they have programs for cultural management. As said above , the Ministry of culture has gone through many changes of its name , size, functions or importance since Sudan's independence in 1956. This situation is a derivative of the overall weakness of the Sudanese State due to a number of reasons we cannot go into here. However, the result is that there has never been a strategic vision of Sudan's future in terms of development; cultural policy is not an exemption. In so far as the cultural situation between the North and the South is concerned, the first recognition of the cultural differences between the two was brought to the fore in an open, public political forum in the round – table conference on the ‘ southern problem’ in 1965. In 1973 , and following the Addis Ababa peace agreement between the North and the south, the Numerie regime held what it called the ‘National Cultural Revolution’ to implement its 1971 reaffirmation of recognizing the cultural particularity of the South. The recommendations were never formulated in a state policy.

When the present Islamist regime came into power in 1989 it raised the slogan of ‘cultural orientation’ which essentially meant reinstating the Arab/Islamic cultural percepts and their application at the individual, group, and national levels. Non-Muslims and non-Arabs were in effect marginalized by this orientation. The CPA, at least on paper, can be seen as a check to such a trend. For, the basic tenets of the Cultural Orientation programs have not been completely abandoned up to now. The 25 years’ Strategic Plan of 2002 shows neither translation of the CPA terms (or to that matter other peace agreements e.g. Khartoum Peace Agreement [1997]; Abuja Agreement [2005]; Darfur Peace Agreement ; and Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement) into a work plan , nor giving up of the Cultural Orientation principles which marginalize some groups on the basis of cultural and religious differences. In addition, and because of lack of a clear vision and weak human and financial resources of the present Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, even routine work , let alone a strategic vision, is not properly conducted.

The failure of the Sudanese State to make and adopt a cultural policy can be attributed to the following : 1. Absence of a clear political vision on the part of the successive ruling elites due to their background formation; 2. Inability of the Sudanese intellectuals to formulate ideas for



the basis of dealing with issues of cultural diversity; 3. Weakness of the structures and institutions responsible for cultural matters; 4. Lack of good planning and qualified personnel at the local and state levels; 5. Meager funding in the areas of training and capacity-building to carryout local cultural projects and activities.

There are many International, Regional and Sudanese NGOs in the Sudan which are concerned with cultural matters ; most important of which are UNESCO, ALESCO (Arab League Education, Science and Culture Organization), ISESCO (Islamic Education, Science and Culture Organization). Following the CPA, a UNESCO office was opened in 2005 with the responsibility of post- conflict reconstruction efforts in the area of culture. Its mandate covers as priorities cooperating with the Sudan Government and UNESCO Sudan National Committee to design and formulate a strategic cultural policy and cultural management programs for the country; empowerment and capacity-building of the youth sector; and empowering women . UNESCO also established an antenna office in Juba, Southern Sudan, to help prepare a cultural policy for the South. However, these efforts have not materialized yet.

The UNESCO Sudan National Committee has an administrative structure headed by a Secretary General and assisted by repertoires of the five sub-committees for UNESCO activities. The chair of the National Committee is the Minister of General Education who is helped by a board of directors. Beside the regular activities of the UNESCO the National Committee has a number of member clubs such as Poetry, Novel, Drama, Music , Architectureetc. clubs. The committee can, and do, recommend cultural projects and plans in the field of culture to both Khartoum Office and UNESO H.Q. The culture committee, a sub-committee of the National Committee, has of recently carried out a number of seminars and workshops in an attempt to lay the basis for the formulation for a national cultural policy and management of cultural diversity to emphasize their importance for national unity . It is currently busy with drawing a cultural map for the Sudan. Despite all these efforts, and the close collaboration of the UNESCO office with all relevant ministries and organizations, there are no tangible results so far. This is partly so for that the national experts on culture are not given the full chance to put to use their expertise and professional skills.

In conjunction with the UNESCO (including Sudan's National Committee and South Sudan's antenna office) an important body involved in the post-conflict reconstruction efforts is the



Joint Assessment Mission, JAM. This mission was established under the umbrella of a coordination unit constituting of representatives of GoS and SPLA/M in collaboration with UNDP and World Bank and to involve the private sector and civil society organization. Its task is to determine the root-causes of conflicts in the Sudan in order to initiate practical solutions to ensure lasting peace. In regard to this, JAM is entrusted with rehabilitation of infrastructure, services and production units in the post conflict stage which has been limited by the CPA to six years (2005-2011). In the JAM document cultural matters are not mentioned explicitly, but dealt with indirectly in the services sector. This is stated to include land –tenure, health, education, and the media. Special stress has been laid on the two latter ones as a means to raise awareness and disseminate knowledge to promote cultural dialogue as basis for enhancing peace culture. In respect to this JAM plans on paper include capacity building programs as well as institutional reforms and facilities upgrading; especially in regional areas. More specifically, three projects on education, media and respect of cultural diversity (SUD -06/P/HR/RL 10-13) were assigned to UNESCO for implementation.

It is to be noted here that the JAM projects on cultural dimensions do not reflect ideas on how to identify the cultural groups in question and their resources, interests, dynamics, relations to other cultural groups ...etc. Nor do the projects indicate the interlinkages between the local cultural bodies, organizations and institutions with their other counterparts at the state or national levels ; or how to, in practical terms, empower the local or regional groups and organs so that they can effectively contribute to a real culturally – diversified, pluralistic Sudan while at the same time keep their cultural identities .

The above alluded to shortcomings in the JAM projects are due – in my opinion- to non-involvement of experts on cultural diversity and pluralism at any stage of planning; just as the case with the CPA. In the two cases the cultural issues are seen from a political and economic perspective. The implicit assumption being that the political and economic approaches are sufficient for dealing with the problems of conflicts in the Sudan. Once these are solved , all cultural issues will automatically fall in place.

There are more than 63 registered civil society organizations in Khartoum – both traditional (e.g. ethnic and tribal associations) and modern (Environmental Association)- some of which are active in the areas of humanitarian assistance, democracy, peace culture, conflict resolutionetc. However, the efforts of the organizations are scattered, disorganized, lack



human capabilities and in most cases dependent on foreign funding or supported by the government as fronts for the National Congress Party, the ruling party. Other political parties do not have declared statements of their views on policy and management with respect to the question of cultural diversity in the `Sudan. Nor do they have regular cultural programs or activities.

In Southern Sudan the SPLA/M since its struggle period has not formulated any integrated policy to deal with cultural issues. The Ministry of Culture in the South occupies a minor position and without adequate funds or qualified personnel to run it . Despite the efforts exerted by the UNESCO and other agencies the cultural problems are huge. Beside the big tribal groupings of the Dinka, Nuer and Shiluk – and each of who has its own language, customs and traditions and very conscious of their identities often engage in confrontations (in a number of times military) some of which premised on cultural variations.

Conclusion

Though the CPA and the Interim Constitution protect all cultural rights and freedoms, they do not specify the mechanisms whereby the different cultures can be promoted to achieve national, cultural pluralism. The CPA's two partners do not seem to be keen so far as to take the issue of culture policy and management seriously. Cultures can be bases for peaceful coexistence , but they can also be fuel for intractable conflicts when historical memories are invoked to stir hatred, for example. It is therefore pertinent that a cultural policy be drawn for the country and a cultural management strategy be devised. Otherwise it will be difficult to conceive of one culturally plural Sudan.

* **Dr Idris Salim El Hassan**, Department of Sociology, University of Khartoum.
Vice-President of the Sudanese Writer's Union
idriselhassan@yahoo.com

