

Looking Ahead

Those who were involved with South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy may remember the "scenario building" which was so useful in South Africa in the period when it was vital that the ANC and the Nationalists talked to each other but found it difficult to do so. The South African embrace of "scenarios" was greatly assisted by the oil company, Shell.

A well-conceived "scenario" project for Sudan could have two main benefits. It could encourage and facilitate the rigorous, and much needed, thinking about all aspects of the place of Oil in Sudan's future, and it could help lay a solid foundation on which peace could be built.

Development

Talisman has spoken proudly of its concern for health, pointing to a new clinic/dispensary being opened in Pariang, and to its hospital in Heglig. We visited the hospital and were impressed by its facilities and equipment. It boasts two incubators in its maternity ward; in all of Ethiopia, there is only one.

But when we were there, we saw almost as many incubators as patients. Talisman explained to us that our visit took place at 4pm during Ramadan, when the outpatients had gone home.

However, when we flew out of Heglig, and passed over the hospital at about 7 am., we counted only two people in the forecourt. There is a suspicion that only Arab patients are welcomed at the hospital, that Dinka and Nuer are kept out of Heglig as far as possible. This is not allayed by word from Talisman that a misunderstanding had led to the patients being moved out when we visited.

In our view, Talisman should sit down with the NGO community and map out just how all parties can make a better contribution to health care in Western Upper Nile/Unity State.

It could also talk with the NGOs, and others in a transparent manner, about how to link in with development projects where this might be appropriate. All ideas could usefully be discussed first with the Canadian NGOs which have expressed their willingness to talk with Talisman, which should also consider how it could help with the development priorities of the Canadian government.

Communications, in Canada

The war in Sudan has been very little reported until recently, when the media in Canada began to take an interest because of the Talisman involvement in oil operations. There would be value in enabling Canadian journalists and campaigners to proceed from the basis of sound and timely information.