



EVALUATION OF CPI PROPOSED TACTIC: CHILD REGISTRATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

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"For children to count, they have to be counted."

- Harry Belafonte

The objective of this analysis is to take our study of NGO advocacy strategies and apply them to an evaluation of Child Protection International's (CPI) proposed tactic of a child registration campaign. This campaign is being considered as a means of countering the practice of intertribal child abduction in South Sudan. It is my hope that this reflection will be useful for us in two main ways. First, I hope to contribute to our careful reflection of this advocacy strategy and the most effective role for our organization. For this, I will review the available information on birth registration programs and consider their applicability to the problem as we understand it. Secondly, I hope this information will be helpful in beginning to identify and reach out to potential partners/funders.

Part I will describe the problem/need we have identified—namely the persistence of intertribal child abduction in South Sudan. Part II will summarize our organization and our advocacy efforts to date. To help consider our most effective role, I will lay out our assets, capacity, and limitations. Part III will discuss the conceptual and pragmatic basis for making child registration our focus and hopefully for persuading others to make it a priority as well. This section will look at child

registration generally, in Africa, and in Sudan. Lastly, Part IV will suggest a proper advocacy strategy for CPI. I will conclude with what I believe should be our next concrete steps in moving forward in this advocacy effort.

I. Intertribal Child Abduction in South Sudan

The cellular relationship that we seek to impact is that of abductor-abductee in South Sudan. The problem of intertribal child abductions in South Sudan first came to our attention through the personal experience of our colleague, Gabriel Kou Solomon.¹ He learned from his family in South Sudan that on October 3, 2007, his nieces, Yar and Ajak, were violently abducted by armed men in a village in Jonglei State. The girls were ages 3 and 1 ½ at the time. In the course of this abduction, his great-grandmother was killed and his grandmother seriously injured.

The story of Yar and Ajak, we eventually learned, is far from an isolated case in South Sudan. Intertribal child abductions, often overlapping with cattle raids, are not a new phenomenon.² The U.S. Department of State has consistently denounced this phenomenon in its *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* for Sudan.³ Since 2005, it has reported that “[a] large number of children suffered abuse, including abduction, enslavement, and forced conscription,” and “[c]hild prostitution, trafficking of children, and sexual abuse of children remained problems, particularly in the

¹ For background on the founding of our organization, please see The Save Yar Campaign Weblog, at <http://gsolomon20.wordpress.com/>.

² See, e.g., Sandra Gray et al., *Cattle Raiding, Cultural Survival, and Adaptability of East African Pastoralists*, 44 *Current Anthropology* S5, December 2003 (discussing the “cultural phenomenon” of cattle raids with automatic weapons since the 1970’s); Ehsan Mohamed Elriah Abdelgadir, *Gender Violence in Conflict Situations: The Case of Abduction of Women and Children in Sudan*, Nov. 2001 (Working Paper, Makerere University, Uganda) available at https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/951/1/abdelgadir_eme_1.pdf.

³ U.S. Dept. of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan 2007*, March 11 2008 [“DOS Country Report 2007”] available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100506.htm>; U.S. Dept. of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan 2006*, March 6, 2007 [“DOS Country Report 2006”] available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78759.htm>; U.S. Dept. of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sudan 2005*, March 8, 2006 [DOS Country Report 2005] available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61594.htm>.

south.”⁴ The reports describe the problem in the following way: “There were credible reports that intertribal abductions of women and children continued in the South. Victims frequently became part of the new tribal family, with most women marrying into the new tribe; however, some victims were used for labor or sexual purposes. . . . The government acknowledged that abductions occurred and that abductees were sometimes forced into domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.”⁵

International bodies have also acknowledged the problem. The Commission on Human Rights passed a country-specific resolution for Sudan in 2000 expressing its “deep concern” at the adverse effect of the current armed conflict on women and children.⁶ It called upon the Government of Sudan to investigate reports of the abduction of women and children, bring to trial persons suspected of supporting or participating in such activities, and facilitate the safe return of affected children to their families.⁷ The Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has expressed its concerns over “continuous reports and allegations regarding the abduction by armed militia of, primarily, women and children belonging to other ethnic groups.”⁸

In Anti-Slavery International’s 2003 submission to the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the organization brought attention specifically to the Government’s failure to

⁴ DOS Country Report 2007, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2006, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2005, *supra* note 3.

⁵ DOS Country Report 2007, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2006, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2005, *supra* note 3. Note, the 2007 report suggests that “[a]s intertribal fighting in the South decreased, the number of abductions also appeared to decline.”

⁶ Sudan (resolution 2000/27), reported in the *Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Report by the Secretary-General*, June 16, 2000, available at <http://www.un.org/esa/documents/ecosoc/docs/2000/e2000-77.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Sudan*, CERD/C/304/add.116 para. 12 (Apr. 27, 2001) available at <http://www.cmi.no/sudan/doc/?id=1248>.

clearly condemn abductions, kidnapping, and forced labor.⁹ Included in this should be the practices of “‘false adoption,’ debt bondage, employing children away from home and without the consent of their parents or guardian, and coercing or persuading girls or women into marriage while keeping them ignorant of their own origins or their rights.”¹⁰ More recently, in Sudan’s Initial Report under Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children in 2007, the government was asked what was being done to address raids carried on villages to abduct children for forced labor and reports of child slavery in the country.¹¹

Sudan has been criticized repeatedly for failing to take action in the area of trafficking of person. In defense of its actions related to ending child abduction, the Government tends to cite either military action¹² or the existence of the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children, (CEAWC) established in May 1999 as evidence of its commitment to the issue.

In responding to questions on the issue by the Human Rights Committee in 2007, the Government of Sudan explained the phenomenon of abduction as an ancient practice between tribes, based on a lack of awareness and old customs, intensified by the civil war.¹³ The delegation mentioned the CEAWC and stated that “thousands” of cases of abduction had been dealt with.¹⁴ Despite a stated desire to pursue legal

⁹ Available at <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2003-sudan.htm>.

¹⁰ Available at <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2003-sudan.htm>.

¹¹ Sudan’s Initial Report under Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Summary by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, May 2007, *available at* <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-73JNYT?OpenDocument>.

¹² Interview with President Salva Kiir, November 11, 2008.

¹³ This is an oft-repeated explanation for the persistence of intertribal child abduction. *See, e.g.*, CERD Concluding Observations, *supra* note 8, at para. 12.

¹⁴ Press Release, Human Rights Committee Considers Third Report of Sudan, July 12, 2007, *available at* [http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/08535AEC45499C5AC12573160060D057?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/08535AEC45499C5AC12573160060D057?OpenDocument).

action against abductors, the government reported that tribal chiefs had preferred to resolve the matter informally through dialogue with the parties.¹⁵

The Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC) was established in 1999 to facilitate the safe return of abducted women and children to their families. In the 2000 Resolution mentioned above, the Commission on Human Rights also referred to then-recent CEAWC. The Commission urged the Government to create the conditions necessary for the CEAWC to carry out its work fully, and called upon the international community to expand its support for activities, in particular those of the Committee.¹⁶

In 2001, the UN Special Rapporteur on Sudan commented on the necessity of political support for the CEAWC to be able to realize its mandate. "CEAWC is . . . suffering from financial constraints and insufficient political backing. I am convinced that political support would prove extremely useful to provide a better visibility to this body which should also be granted more authority, especially at the regional and local level."¹⁷ The absence of political will continued. The Special Rapporteur commented in his statement to the Commission on Human Rights in 2003 that the CEAWC had been described to him as "massively dysfunctional."¹⁸ He highlighted that "no public statements were made [by the Government] in support of CEAWC by the highest political levels."¹⁹ A member of the CEAWC also cited the lack of political support as a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of the Committee's mandate,

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Sudan (resolution 2000/27), reported in the *Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Report by the Secretary-General*, June 16, 2000, available at <http://www.un.org/esa/documents/ecosoc/docs/2000/e2000-77.pdf>.

¹⁷ Mr. Gerhart R. Baum, Statement on the Human Rights Situation in the Sudan to the Commission on Human Rights, Mar. 29, 2001, available at <http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/0/072FE7F713DE0F4FC1256A29002A3757?opendocument>.

¹⁸ As reported by Anti-Slavery International, <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2003-sudan.htm>

¹⁹ As reported by Anti-Slavery International, <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2003-sudan.htm>

noting (in 2001) that the CEAWC was operating entirely on foreign/international donor support.²⁰

The Committee, largely criticized while active, eventually ceased functioning in early 2006 because of a lack of funding and support by the Government.²¹ In 2007, the U.S. Department of State reported that the CEAWC and its 22 joint tribal committees, while continuing to investigate abduction cases, “ha[d] not engaged in any transport or retrieval missions since early 2006 due to lack of funding.”²²

A true political will to address issues around child abduction has been absent in South Sudan and this became the focus of the Save Yar Campaign/Child Protection International.

II. Child Protection International: Organization Assessment

Child Protection International began as a small, dedicated group of students from a variety of academic disciplines. Our strongest assets continue to be our research and writing capabilities, interdisciplinary advocacy experience, our ability to mobilize the student body, our familiarity and reliance on universal human rights norms, influential connections through advisors and supporters of the campaign, and the personal story of experience with abduction. The focus of our advocacy efforts has generally been to bring this neglected issue to the attention of those powerful players with the capacity and/or obligation to influence the conditions that allow the problematic relationship between abductee-abductor to persist.

²⁰ *Gender Violence in Conflict*, *supra* note 2, at 24. This author states that the CEAWC worked in close cooperation with UNICEF, Save the Children’s Fund (UK), Swedish Save the Children, and Heads of Missions of the European Union.

²¹ DOS Country Report 2007, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2006, *supra* note 3.

²² DOS Country Report 2007, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2006, *supra* note 3.

Our group initiated an advocacy campaign around the case of Yar and Ajak in October of 2007. We began contacting children's rights organizations and institutions around the world and actively researching the situation in South Sudan. We launched a public and political campaign directed at the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, demanding action on the issue of child abduction generally and on the case of Yar and Ajak specifically. We developed a postcard and petition campaign directed at the Government of South Sudan Mission to Washington D.C. office. Our political representatives were very responsive to our efforts and we counted on the support of Senators Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar and Representatives Betty McCollum and Keith Ellison. In November 2007 our group met with several officials of the Government of South Sudan in their Washington D.C. headquarters. We eventually met with President Kiir on November 11, 2007 to discuss the question of child abduction. President Kiir expressed a mutual concern about the violence, but was committed to a military response if necessary. We urged him to find a peaceful resolution to the problem²³ and he assured us that the wave of abductions we saw in 2007 "will not repeat itself next dry season."

We recently learned that in early March 2008, the Government of South Sudan brought the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children back to life by providing it with US\$1 million to resume its release and transport efforts.²⁴ Soon after the investment, the CEAWC negotiated the release of 166 individuals from their abductors and transported them to transit centers.²⁵ This confirms the

²³ For a summary of our plea to President Kiir, please see our November 15, 2008 letter confirming the details of our meeting, available at http://gsolomon20.files.wordpress.com/2007/11/letter-to-kiir_11-15-07.pdf.

²⁴ As reported United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2008 - Sudan, 4 June 2008, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/484f9a3ec.html>

²⁵ *Id.*

effectiveness of our targeted advocacy efforts and the potential for a small group in Minnesota to impact the decisions on human rights policy abroad.

To our personal disappointment, Yar and Ajak were not part of those released from their captors. Additionally, the rescue and return process had several serious problems. Problems reported included a lack of transparency and access to the victims by other state agencies and UN staff, as well as a failure to meet the abductees basic needs of food, water, and shelter.²⁶ A third category of problems was that the process “lacks a mechanism to conduct family tracing or reintegrate abductees into their former communities.”²⁷

Our campaign has continued to research the problem; we conducted an information-gathering visit to Juba in March of 2008 and held a congressional briefing on the issue in June 2008. One of the most challenging aspects of choosing the next step in working to end child abduction is the overall underdevelopment of South Sudan. The problems of human rights protection and promotion are multi-layered and intertwined. As the Department of State has observed, a repeated problem each year is that “[t]here were no informed estimates on the extent of trafficking, including for ... domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, or other types of forced labor.”²⁸ The lack of credible statistics is more than just an obstacle to effective advocacy. We have identified the lack of information as both a symptom and a perpetual cause of the lack of oversight and infrastructure generally in this region. To address this identified problem, it has been proposed that we direct our efforts next into a program for registering children with information such as name, age, fingerprints, and parentage.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ DOS Country Report 2007, *supra* note 3; DOS Country Report 2006, *supra* note 3.

The following section will introduce child registration programs as a human rights advocacy strategy.

III. Child Registration / Identification

All children have the right to a name, nationality, and family.²⁹ Birth registration is an independent right; states have a corresponding obligation under international law to register children. Article 7.1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child declares that children “shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.” Additionally, Article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child instructs that, *inter alia*, “Every child shall be registered immediately after birth.”

When submitting information for periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, States are instructed to indicate the specific measures adopted to ensure that every child is registered immediately after birth.³⁰ Specifically the Committee requests information on (1) the steps taken to “prevent the non-registration of children immediately after birth, including in view of possible social or cultural obstacles, *inter alia*, in rural or remote areas, in relation to nomadic groups, displaced persons, as well as asylum-seeking and refugee children”;³¹ (2) “the measures taken to sensitize and mobilize public opinion on the need for birth registration of children, and to provide adequate training to registry personnel”;³² and (3) “the elements of the

²⁹ See ICCPR Article 24(2); CRC Articles 7 & 8; AHCR Articles 18. Sudan has ratified or acceded to each of these. For information on Sudan’s ratification of international human rights treaties, see the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/research/ratification-sudan.html>.

³⁰ *CRC General Guidelines on Periodic Reports*, UN Doc. CRC/C/58, p. 13 (1996).

³¹ *Id.* at 49.

³² *Id.* at 50.

child's identity included in the birth registration and the measures adopted to prevent any kind of stigmatization or discrimination of the child."³³

Despite international consensus on the importance of these rights and clear treaty obligations on states, UNICEF reports that there are around 51 million unregistered births around the world each year.³⁴

In addition to having support in international law as an end in itself, the registration of children initiates their legal existence and is fundamental for the realization of many other rights. Among those often cited are: providing and monitoring access to healthcare and immunizations, ensuring that children are enrolled in school, enforcing laws prohibiting child labor and forced marriage, protecting youth from military conscription, and protecting children who are trafficked, particularly through repatriation and family union.³⁵

In a background paper prepared for the Second Eastern and Southern Africa Conference on Universal Birth Registration, Plan International acknowledges "[b]irth registration is the first point of contact between a child and the state. It is the first and fundamental right in and of itself. And it is the door to other rights, providing a measure of protection against age-related exploitation and abuse."³⁶ The Country Report prepared for Zambia focuses on the need for official acknowledgement of the individual's existence by the State, the recognition of legal person under their law. A particular danger of failure to register is that "[a]s their existence has never been recorded, there is no guarantee that their disappearance will be either."³⁷

³³ *Id.* at 51.

³⁴ UNICEF, *A World Fit for Children Statistical Review*, 2007.

³⁵ UNICEF, *A World Fit for Children Statistical Review*, 2007.

³⁶ African Child Forum, *Universal Birth Registration: The Challenge in Africa* (prepared for the Second Eastern and Southern Africa Conference on Universal Birth Registration in Mombasa, Kenya, September 26 – 30, 2005) available at http://www.africanchildforum.org/Documents/Universal%20Birth%20Registration_final.pdf.

³⁷ *Id.*

The failure to register has direct consequences on the individual in terms of an inability to access other rights. Additionally, the lack of official information makes monitoring any situation incredibly difficult. Therefore, birth registration campaigns are often grounded in the long-term macro-policy monitoring and planning benefits that come from quite simply being able to understand the type of problems that communities are facing.

Conceptually, birth registration also has potential norm-setting value. The task of designing a community-based registration campaign and implementing it will have the benefit of creating a point of insertion for a rights-based discourse around protection of children. One of the most striking features of child abduction in South Sudan is the parallel it appears to have with cattle raiding. A campaign for child registration, and the community mobilizing that would be necessary to carry it out, may serve to lay the general foundation for an expanded social conception of children as rights-bearers.

Birth Registration in Africa

Despite many African countries' ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the inclusion of the birth registration provision in the African Charter, it has been suggested that child identification campaigns in Africa face particular challenges.³⁸ A common observation is that the movement toward child identification is foreign to the continent, and any experience with it is generally associated with colonization.³⁹ Secondly, a lack of official records correlates very closely with general underdevelopment and marginalization.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.* at 8.

A general observation coming out of the Africa Child Forum is the need to garner support in the government and in the communities.⁴⁰ The benefits for children and for long-term policy planning should be emphasized. Particularly with governments, it was suggested that emphasis be placed on the international obligation to ensure universal birth registration and its importance in setting the national agenda. Especially concerning is the fear on the part of communities or governments that the registration could serve to favor or prejudice a particular ethnic group. Any implementation of a registration program would need to adequately address these concerns.

Birth Registration in South Sudan

A particular challenge around advocating for and implementing a child registration campaign in South Sudan is the national political situation. Unlike other countries with a clearly identified central government, Sudan is currently under a divided government through a temporary power-sharing agreement.⁴¹ When the Government of the Republic of the Sudan (GOS) and the rebel movement Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on January 9, 2005, they committed themselves to a permanent ceasefire. This agreement ended a 21-year long civil war, and established Southern Sudan as a semi-autonomous region within Sudan and included a right of self-determination.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 20.

⁴¹ Full text of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is available at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EVIU-6AZBDB?OpenDocument>. For an introduction to the CPA, see BBC, *Q&A on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3211002.stm>; BBC, *Referendum 2011*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6284976.stm>.

⁴² The main development on this point was that Southern Sudan and its overwhelmingly Christian population would not be subject to *Sharia* law.

Especially for considering an advocacy strategy that focuses on an official state policy (legal registration), this arrangement deserves special consideration. For example, in response to the questions by the Immigration and Refugee Board in Canada, Sudanese officials explained the variety of formal identification documents in Sudan.⁴³ A Sudanese official responding to these questions informed the Board that “birth certificates are issued to most people in Sudan.”⁴⁴ Our experience would suggest that this is not the case for the marginalized, poor, and undeveloped South. Unlike other countries, where the challenge is to extend the formal process of recognition that exist in urban centers to the rural communities, in Sudan the objective is likely not to be bringing the communities of the South into the established mechanisms of Khartoum. There are arguments to be made that extending national identity documents are very important for the political process.⁴⁵ Anecdotal evidence suggests that only the small number of elites in the South actually have the necessary national identification documents to participate in the election process mandated by the CPA.⁴⁶

For our purposes, it may be best to consider the possibility of a child identification program run by the Government of South Sudan rather than out of the Khartoum structures. The need for quantifiable information has been recognized by the Government of South Sudan.⁴⁷ It is possible that the idea of a program registering children in South Sudan will be seen as an important step towards their autonomous

⁴³ Immigration and Refugee Board in Canada, Response to Information Request, Sudan, Feb. 27, 2007, available at <http://www.cisr-irb.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450950> (“the main identity documents carried in Sudan include the identity card, the citizenship identity document, the driver’s licence, the birth certificate and the passport.”)

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ See the opinion discussed in *No voters in Southern Sudan for the midterm elections?*, at <http://www.newsudanvision.com/opinion/no-voters-southern-sudan-midterm-elections-1313>.

⁴⁶ See the discussion at <http://www.newsudanvision.com/opinion/no-voters-southern-sudan-midterm-elections-1313>.

⁴⁷ For example, the Southern Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics and Evaluation comments on its webpage, <http://sscscse.org>: “As Southern Sudan emerges from a period of conflict, the use of statistics and availability of key indicators will be critical to the public and private sector decision making processes, and to the development of our country.”

government of the region. As asserted above, developing political will is essential for the successful implementation of such a campaign. The importance placed on the 2008 Census could be used as an analogy or starting point for convincing officials of the importance and benefit of prioritizing child registration.⁴⁸

IV. Proposed Role for CPI

As I highlighted above, we saw a concrete impact from our advocacy efforts focused on pressuring political actors through numerous channels. We can very easily avoid many of the complicated questions discussed above. Based on our capacity, assets, and experience, it would seem that the most effective role we could play in this process is advocating for a child registration system in South Sudan. We can avoid the most challenging questions, like how to carry out such a program, how much it would cost, what would be the cultural complications, what would be the exact relation to national identification procedures, etc.

Some NGO work on designing and implementing their own child registration process. For example, there is an organization that has worked on developing child registration programs in Mozambique on its own initiative.⁴⁹ It worked intensely with local NGOs and community groups to develop the program and has reported the program as highly successful. However, I believe that our energy would be much more efficiently directed by focusing first on those organizations that already have particular expertise in this area.

⁴⁸ For a very helpful introduction to the Fifth Population Census of the Sudan, mandated by the CPA, see the background paper prepared in October 2006 by the United Nations Population Fund, available at <http://sudan.unfpa.org/census/docs/Background%20Information%20about%20the%20census.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Information on the group can be found at the New Tactics site, <http://www.newtactics.org/en/tactics/using-participatory-research>.

I believe we can be quite effective in: (1) convincing those with expertise in South Sudan to support a child registration campaign; (2) persuading those with expertise in running child registration campaigns that South Sudan is in need of such an effort; and (3) advocating for political support of the program with Government of South Sudan officials and agencies. We will have to be mindful of the challenges presented above, but there are many actors better equipped to work through the logistics of these programs. If we successfully advocated for the need of a program like this, a collaboration of international child's right organizations, local organizations, and government actors could concern themselves with the details and potentially implement a highly effective program.

What we bring to the equation is first of all, a commitment to the problem of child abduction and a refusal to allow this situation to not be a priority of those responsible. Secondly, we are on very strong footing for asserting the need for child registration of some kind (free, universal, and secure at a minimum). There is solid international consensus on the worth and obligation of legal recognition of children.

Thirdly, focusing our advocacy on a child registration program we should be able to find numerous partners. For those organizations that already specialize in registering children, our advocacy could focus on the need to bring these efforts in full force to South Sudan. For organizations working in the areas of health, education, civil and political rights, humanitarian aid, *inter alia*, should be convinced that supporting child registration would also further their particular objectives. For the Government of South Sudan, this could be conveyed as an opportunity to respond to criticisms that it has not taken a stand against trafficking or been active enough in prevention. It may also be a chance to further develop as the legitimate, sovereign power of the region.

Recommendations

1. Connect with Plan International.

Plan, founded in 1937, describes itself as a grassroots “global partnership” to help kids. The organization works on a variety of fronts, but in the two years since launching its Universal Birth Registration Campaign it has become a leader in the field. “Plan has joined forces with UNICEF, national and local governments, international organizations and groups around the world to make birth registration accessible to all, free, confidential, safe and simple.”⁵⁰

Plan is active in Sudan and it reports that it has “organized a national workshop on birth registration which resulted in a set of recommendations for change in legislation.”⁵¹ However, it appears that Plan’s initiatives thus far have focused on the national government in Khartoum. We should find out their activity, if any, in the South. Based on our experience, I believe we could be very effective advocates for raising the profile of the South to this organization, an established organization with demonstrated commitment to and expertise in child registration strategies.

2. Consider UNICEF involvement.

While Plan International appears to partner frequently with UNICEF in its birth registration campaigns, should we find that Plan is not immediately receptive to considering the situation of South Sudan, we may want to attempt to advocate to UNICEF directly. Additionally, it appears that UNICEF has coordinated with and supported the efforts of the CEAWC in the past.

3. Discover the current status of the CEAWC.

First and foremost, its mandate with relation to the CPA is not entirely clear; where it fits in the power-sharing structure needs to be determined. We do know that

⁵⁰ Plan homepage, Birth Registration, <http://www.planusa.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/396751>.

⁵¹ <http://www.writemedown.org/research/casestudies/govs/>

the Government of South Sudan has invested money directly into the Committee, but by all accounts this is a national body and how it would relate to a South Sudanese effort for birth registration is unclear.

In light of the newly discovered information that CEAWC is once again operational, we need to be familiar with their activities. It would be interesting to gauge the Committee's receptivity to a child registration system as part of its efforts. Because funding has been such an obstacle in the past, the Committee might be responsive to partnering with outside NGOs on a specific initiative such as child registration.

The CEAWC would be a specialized agency working on child abduction in South Sudan. Advocating the importance and potential of a child registration program to this body seems critical since it is most likely the agency with the most actual knowledge of the details of the type of intertribal child abduction that we are hoping to reach. This agency could be in a position to offer valuable information and insight into the actual design of such a child registration program. Our role would be the initial advocacy to get the Committee to consider this strategy and then eventually to work on supporting the efforts through seeking out resources and further political support for the efforts.

Conclusion

Directing our efforts towards advocating the cause of child registration has many benefits. We are able to move forward on a need we have identified while avoiding any contentious finger-pointing. Abduction can be discussed as a fact without our organization having to make any assertion as to specific cause of the intertribal violence, a difficult stance for an outside group. By resting our moral force

on the international guarantees our claims are not vulnerable to being discredited for a failure to understand ancient traditions or customs.

We are also able to avoid addressing the allegations that there are parents willingly placing their children to be trafficked. The strategy of child registration and the normative, public education value it has, works against all forms of trafficking by focusing first and foremost on children as rights-bearers.

While considered an independent right in itself, child registration is also seen as fundamental for the protection and exercise of many rights. We should be able to find several partners that will likely see supporting a child registration campaign as advancing their particular cause—e.g., health, education, humanitarian protection.

Particularly because of our unique capacity and experience as a group, I believe we could serve as very effective advocates for a child registration program in South Sudan.