

## Update from the Field: SUDAN, June 30, 2007 Nadim Matta, Rapid Results Institute

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Greetings from Sudan – an unlikely place for empowerment and accountability if you read the popular international press. And yet what we saw in the last two weeks speaks volumes about the determination of the Sudanese communities to make a better life for themselves, in peace and in dignity.

One Rapid Results Initiative was completed in each of thirteen post-conflict communities in North Kordofan, South Kordofan, and Kassala. This was part of a Community Driven Development program (called CDF in Sudan) financed by a trust fund set up by the donor community to support the peace accord between the North and the South signed 18 months ago.

The results that the community Rapid Results teams delivered, with support of the coaches we trained, have exceeded everyone's expectations. Real schools built where one hundred days ago children gathered under a straw roof with no walls and with rocks that passed for benches. Health Center built. Well system rehabilitated. And all done with significant contributions from community members who provided most of the local materials that were needed to do the construction (mud-bricks, water, stones). In one village, the women carried (on their head) the equivalent of 13 barrels of water a day, over a period of 50 days to supply the contractor during the construction period. In another, the women stood on the side cheering on as the men carried the stones...

Of course, the most exciting part is that in each case the team committed to a "results goal" of their choice, linked however indirectly to the physical construction effort. This got the teams involved in tackling social and behavior change issues. Most teams exceeded their results goals: on average, enrollment in the schools doubled in the past 100 days (with female enrollment a special focus in some places – particularly challenging considering the social norms in some of the States). School drop-out rates were cut in half in the two communities that focused on that goal. And malaria incidence among pregnant women and young children in one community fell from an expected 50 to single digits!

The team that focused on reducing the incidence of malaria had a really interesting story to tell. When we asked one of the team members whether bed-nets were the answer, he said that bed-nets were not enough, as children often mess with these and most people do not maintain them well. For their team, fighting the mosquitoes was part of the answer. As part of the Rapid Results work plan they developed, they visited the malaria control unit in the State and learned about the mosquito habits, and also about a special fish that feeds only on mosquito larvae. So they got some fish with them and then went back to their villages and collected samples of mosquito larvae (much to the amusement of other community members who watched these white turbaned tribal men huddled around ponds fishing for mosquito larvae). Nevertheless, they verified for themselves that the fish devoured the larvae, and so they set the fish loose in the ponds around the village: *"...much better than the chemical materials – and besides we can eat the fish after the mosquito season is over..."*



Even more impressive was the persistence that these teams showed. In one case, the Rapid Results team asked every family in the community to bake mud bricks so they can contribute to the construction. In one month, 21,000 bricks were prepared. But they needed to pick up the pace to avoid delays in the work plan. They decided that simple acceleration will not do (and attributed this insight to the tennis ball exercise they did at the RRI launch workshop). And so they divided the community into clusters and set a production goal for each cluster. In the next month, they more than doubled the production of the previous month (they struck 50,000 bricks), which got the construction part of their project back on track!



***Tarouba School, before...***

***Tarouba School, 100 days after!***

In another community with 11 tribes (in the Nuba mountains), the RRI team arbitrated between two tribes that had been at odds with each other over a land dispute, to make sure that every tribe contributed its share to the school project. The Rapid Results teams was the right venue for conflict resolution, as it had one representative from every tribe, all committed to the same goal. So a long-standing land dispute between two tribes was resolved as a by-product of an RRI aimed at increasing school enrollment!

In yet another community, the RRI team moved boldly to take control of a water system which for the past fourteen years had been exploited by a powerful figure claiming to represent an international NGO that had drilled the wells more than a decade ago. The NGO had long ago disappeared from the country. And yet its local representative continued to extract water usage fees from community members. Supported by the CDF leadership, the RRI team took their case to the Governor and to the courts, and they used this to negotiate collectively with the "NGO representative" for a more equitable share of water rights. One of the reasons they were able to do this was that the RRI team was a venue for collective action for all fourteen districts ("ahya") of the community. According to the team members, the districts had never come together before to discuss the water issue, which allowed the "NGO representative" to play one district off the other, and to negotiate separate deals with each one.

These are only a few of the stories of persistence, empowerment, and innovation that the teams told to Locality and State officials at the 100-day "sustainability reviews" of their Rapid Results Initiatives.

Now that the first wave of RRIs has been completed and social mobilizers (newly minted RRI coaches) in each locality had had their first experience of supporting Rapid Results teams, CDF has asked the Institute to work with

their teams to help transfer the capacity to manage in a Rapid Results mode to the newly formed Locality staff. These staff had been appointed in the past year in line with a decentralization strategy that was an integral part of the Naivasha peace agreement. The capacity transfer plan will be key towards institutionalization, and it is a step towards the broader vision of the CDF leadership team to phase itself progressively out of service delivery, sector by sector, as the capacity to manage these sectors strengthens within each of the targeted Locality.