Like Semaphore in the Dark:

There Must Be A Better Way to Communicate

by

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Abstract

The World’s newest nation, South Sudan, is struggling to hold itself together. The Canadian government has recognized the need to aid the population as the country attempts to right itself; and yet, doing so without engaging the nation’s government. The country has been likened to a derelict boat run by untrained officers and inexperienced crew. There is a need to both keep the passengers safe and train the
crew. Without building capacity in the officers and crew the global community is condemned to providing aid at infinitum. To board the ship and take over without the blessing of the officers, is an act of piracy no matter how well intentioned. Just as semaphore is an outdated method of communication, the Canadian government must find new ways to communicate with and fund service providers who are seeking to help this fragile state become more robust.

**Key Words**

NGO, GAC, Development, Capacity Building, Inter-agency Communication

**Introduction**

South Sudan, the world’s youngest country (U.N. News Service 2016) is being torn apart by conflict as forces loyal to the president battle with those of the former vice-president. It appears to some that the world’s newest country maybe the world’s next failed state. While Canada publically stated in 2014 that South Sudan is a priority country (Government of Canada, 2014), the actual resources the government has committed appear, at first glance, to pale in comparison to the level of commitment its peers have offered. As of August 31, 2017 Canada had committed 73 personnel to the UN’s peacekeeping effort compared to the 2,654 China has deployed, 1,430 from South Africa and 7,009 from Pakistan (Troop and Police Contributors, 2017). Ian Smillie (2015) suggested that Canada isn’t truly interested in helping the countries that are most desperately in need. If this is the case, and our world’s newest nation is in a most desperate situation, then it begs the question - can we effectively communicate to our government the value of supporting development in a fragile state?

The research proposed in this document will seek to address this question by examining the experiences of International Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and private sector service
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providers who have sought to work in South Sudan with the aid of Canadian federal government funding. In order to get a balanced understanding of the issue, this research interviewed respondents from the government, NGOs and South Sudanese nationals that have had dealings with Canadian NGOs in South Sudan.

The experience of individual NGOs may not be entirely representative of the government’s desire to work in a region. In the past the Canadian government has stated that South Sudan is a priority region. What does this mean in practical terms? If some NGOs are feeling unsupported by the government in their attempts to work there, is there an inner circle of preferred NGOs the government works with and if so, how does an agency gain entry? Development work is more than an agency deciding to carry out the programmes they deem important. Whatever projects are pursued in a region have repercussions throughout the community. The level of community engagement and the means by which implementing agencies, like NGOs, work in a region will determine the long-term of effectiveness of development projects.

Relationships between people or between states are based on their ability to communicate with each other. When an NGO communicates to its home government it is not one amorphous entity talking to another. All organizations and institutions are filled with people who communicate with other people. Therefore, this research sought to:

1) Understand what facilitates and derails communication with the gatekeepers who guard the path to the decision makers.

2) Look at what could be called ‘lighthouse” programmes that have demonstrate effective inter-agency communication. Have there been beacons of success that could be replicated? The synergy
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between communication strategies and strong community engagement lays a solid foundation from which to start building a strategy for effective development planning.

Guiding Questions

What are the opinions of key stakeholders on Canadian-South Sudanese relations? As NGOs and public sector service providers attempt to navigate the political landscape and deliver much needed services to those who are in the most need, do they and their political masters see the need to listen to the community, to map and reflect on the desideratum topography, or instead do they deliver programmes and services that are geared toward their own needs rather than the needs of the community? A dam built in a dry riverbed will never wash away. Is there a feeling among service providers that the Canadian government funding politically safe programmes that deliver a reasonable expectation of a return on investment as an expedient way to appear humane to their voter base?

All research needs a method of finding the valuable truffles in a field of mud. To that end, the Literature Review sought to map the field that informed the Interview process as the tool of discovery. In order to understand the nature of the problem and to develop the means to address it, the Literature Review pursued themes concerning the roles NGOs undertake while operating in foreign states and their relationship to the Canadian government, decision making theory and a revolutionary communication project that changed the future of Newfoundland’s Fogo Island.

Literature Review

Communication in its most basic form is how we get our ideas across to someone else. This runs the spectrum from diplomatic negotiations to ordering lunch. It is innate; we are born with the ability.
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For many it seems too simple to contemplate. Effective communication opens up doors, builds rapport and deepens relationships. In order to understand how Canadian bureaucracies relate to the NGOs working in South Sudan, this literature review explores the role NGOs play in development; some of the basics of diplomacy and decision making; the way that NGOs, governments, and the World Bank interact\(^1\); and an example of how important ideas have been communicated up and down the lines of power.

**The NGOs (and why the research will be conducted with the NGOs)**

There are many NGOs that are policy entrepreneurs looking for openings to exploit and places where they can shape and influence public policy (Najam, 2000; Young et al 2014). At their best, they are the branch of civil society that will take an active role in serving the needs of a population, stepping in to do the things they would like to see governments doing but for some reason cannot or will not do (Najam, 2000). Carne Ross (2014) tells us that the world’s most pressing issues, from inequality, to terrorism, to climate change, are transnational and increasingly involve non-state actors. In 2009 Ross suggested that the power of the state is in decline and non-state actors like NGOs and the mafia are taking their place. In spite of the reticence of states to negotiate with non-state actors, NGOs need to consider developing diplomatic capabilities (Ross 2009).

When it comes to the delivery of services, many governments, along with the UN, are relying more and more on NGOs (Atack 1999). The relationship between the state and NGOs isn’t always harmonious. There is a constant sense of tension that should rightly exist if both are doing their jobs (Najam, 2000) since this tension can lead to a better overall experience for those being helped (Atack, 1999). Najam (2000) noted that governments and NGOs are working together now more than ever and probed into the reason why some of these relationships prove to be more effective than others. He concluded that there are four basic power structures in their interactions: cooperation; cooptation;
confrontation and complementary. He provides a cautionary note when he reminds us that NGOs are not all serving society’s best interests and not all heroes wear white hats. Both World Vision and the Klux Klan (KKK) are NGOs with vastly different moral codes and practices. An NGO must also blend its organizational culture with that of its funder. When an NGO seeks to engage in an international development project, it must show that its work aligns itself with the objectives of the funding government.

**Working in Civil Society**

Many NGOs, both international and indigenous, perceive their work as taking up the slack where a government fails to provide adequate care for its citizens. To understand the value in the work they undertake, we need to know exactly what they are doing and explore what parameters are best to judge their outcomes.

Since the 1990’s, the World Bank has been pushing states to partner with NGOs in delivering the services they are funding (Bräutigam, & Segarra, 2007). The methods employed by the World Bank have not been without controversy, and have engendered some polarizing attitudes on their activities. Depending on what side of the divide you are on, the World Bank brought NGOs in either to help oversee programmes in order to chaperone their money in questionable states (Bräutigam, & Segarra, 2007) or because the World Bank had a public relations problem. In the past the Bank has been criticized for ignoring the concerns of indigenous populations and may now want to be seen as consulting with the individuals around whom development is occurring (Brown & Fox 1999). Depending on your view of the World Bank, this about turn either grew out of a genuine attempt to change their (the Bank’s) way of doing business or was simply window dressing to placate their critics. In the case of these studies, the authors come to the conclusion that NGO involvement in service delivery is a positive model. Examining the issue from opposite sides of the coin, Michael Edward,
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formerly of the World Bank, and Iain Atack of the Irish school of Ecumenics examined the organizational legitimacy and effectiveness of NGOs working with local populations. They concur in one important finding, when an NGO works with a group of people they have the ability to empower that group to take some control of their lives. An ideal development model would include the ability for local citizens to take over, having been mentored in the necessary skills (Edwards, 1999; Atack, 1999). We can conclude that, in an ideal world, development projects conducted within ’at-risk’ states would benefit from having an NGO partner that can develop local skills to a point where they are no longer needed.

When Edwards (1999) took a close look at the ways in which NGOs were delivering services in South-east Asia, he noted, that in order to have a lasting positive impact with the greatest chance of transformative change, long-term goals must be in place with little change in direction. This is not something that a quarter-by-quarter investment report could possibly show. It is not possible to produce dramatic growth in the short-term. Similarly, Ian Smillie (2015) expressed concern about the focus on results-driven methodologies promoted by countries like Canada. He explains that development projects are experimental by nature and therefore subject to failure. If failure is not an option, then those states that are on the margin cannot be considered. To work in a fragile state is inherently risky. Unless we are able to reframe development work in these areas from an investment/return mindset to one of experimentations in transformations, the politicians and public may continue to view work in fragile states as not worthy for embarkation.

Can You Hear Me? I’m Talking to You.

There is a certain degree of tension between governments and NGOs. Both need the other to accomplish various strategic goals. We have seen that NGOs are becoming vital to our age, and that governments are increasingly reliant on services provided by such external agencies. There are tasks a
government wants accomplished, and for one reason or another, feel they cannot take these on themselves and seek to subcontract their responsibility to an NGO. Whether NGO initiatives are self-generated or come from a government request, outside funding is almost always needed. In many cases this means that NGOs need to petition their home government to convince them of the validity of their work and the importance of the funding. As noted by Smillie (2015), governments get cold feet when it comes to funding high-risk projects and projects in fragile states present a greater risk than those in regions that are stable. Therefore a strategy needs to be found to convince the governments that hold the purse strings, that there is value in funding projects in fragile states. Ross (2009) states, that events on one side of the world have ripple effects that touch all of us. A simple cursory examination of world events demonstrates the validity of this argument. One need look no farther than the tension surrounding the topic of migrants, as millions of people have sought a new home in Western Europe and North America (Alba & Foner, 2015). If this is so, then we have a vested interest in the success of marginalized states. Therefore, communication initiatives that shine a light on the needs and benefits of working in at-risk-states are needed to encourage funding bodies to risk embarking on transformative projects.

NGOs have traditionally relied on the mainstream media to get their story out to the public and to put pressure on governments, but in recent years have come to realize they need to change the way they deliver their message. Although not an NGO, Greenpeace has become a master in media manipulation and their playbook has proven to be an education in influencing the powerful. Beginning with a photo shoot showing Bridget Bardot and a baby seal, Greenpeace quickly learned how to attract media attention and how much power media held over public opinion (Adamson, 2016). As the online world gains prominence, NGOs are looking at electronic media and considering how it can carry their message. Thrall, Stecula & Sweet (2014) noted that currently there is an attempt by organizations to take
a short cut to their target audience by using social media and noted that information and opinions are readily available on any subject. The public must increasingly find ways to cut out the clutter to get to what they want. In the online world with almost an infinite number of bytes of information, attention is a resource that the big players seem to be able to access. Small players tend to get lost in the deluge. Thomas McPhail (2014) put forward the theory of Electronic Colonialism whereby multinational corporations use mass media to colonize the planet, steamrolling many cultures by mass market selling of Western cultural products. The same holds true for NGOs. Wallace (2009) argues the NGOs who are funded by Northern Industrialized nations, whether willingly or not, are rolling out their funders philosophies across the globe overpowering the voice of the small “artisanal” operators in the countries where they work.

Online activism campaigns are now floating around the Internet by the thousands. These are referred to as “slactivism” because all that is required is to retweet, share or hit the ‘like’ button. Kristofferson, White, and Peloza (2014) have noted that slactivism rarely leads participants to engage more deeply into more consequential forms of real-world activism. When Malcom Gladwell (2010) compared the civil rights movement to our modern online campaigns (New Yorker, 2010) he suggested that for activism to be meaningful it must occur in the real world among people who have established rapport with each other. Bureaucracies do not like change and for governments to feel pressured to seriously examine a new idea it must feel an urgent need from its constituency. The online world provides a medium designed to offer one idea after another in rapid succession. This constant state of movement drains the power out of passionate calls for action. To create the sustained effort needed to get the ear of the government, other avenues need to be explored.
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Making Decisions

In examining how decisions are made, creative thinking must come into play. Fresh ways may be needed to make a case for funding development projects in at-risk-states. In many ways a situation may need to be reframed in order for bureaucrats to examine the project with fresh eyes. Roger Martin (2007) from the Rotman School of Management, espouses a method of negotiation that eschews compromise. He suggests that many business negotiations are a win-lose model, where one party walks away victorious and leaves the other feeling oppressed. He suggests that compromise is a lose-lose situation where both parties leave the table unsatisfied. He lays out a model of negotiation referred to as “Integrative Thinking” where binary negotiating positions are left behind and a commitment is made to find a third path that leaves both parties feeling empowered. If the international community attempts to impose a solution on South Sudan, the government will not “own” the solution and not feel the same level of commitment in carrying out the plan. Kahneman and Tversky explored the way decisions are made in their 1979 proposal for ‘Prospect Theory.’ This theory would become a seminal moment in its contribution to the field of what is now known as Behavioral Economics, in that it examines the way humans make decisions. In her study on how barriers inform and may enhance the decision making process, Walinga (2010) builds on the foundation laid by ‘Prospect’ Theory to make a case for the creative thinking process. Changing one of our decision-making parameters can reframe the question enough to come up with a workable solution. By examining assumptions made regarding the question, the constraints placed on the solution and the appraisal of the situation, a thorough analysis of the problem can be made. Too often we fail to examine creative third options. By becoming emotionally attached to an idea or way of doing things we often constrain ourselves to inferior problem solving techniques. Kahneman (2011) explains how humans are risk averse. On the whole the average person will work harder to avoid a loss then to achieve a gain. The availability heuristic says that what I hear
about most often must be true. If I regularly hear negative things about an issue my attitude toward if will likely also be negative.

**Fogo Island: A Lighthouse Guides the Way**

Examining where others have found success will help those who follow find their path. This is the principle for ‘Lighthouse’ institutions that are willing to share their best practices. Singhal has taken this concept one step further and refers to individuals who buck the norm to find creative solutions to perplexing problems as “Positive Deviants” (2013). Too often “expert” consultants are brought in to “fix” a situation using methods that have worked in the past, in a different context, without fully understanding the local context. Singhal proposes that instead of coming in to tell people how to do things right, they should come in to listen carefully to what has worked and help build solutions from that well understood base.

Don Snowden could quite legitimately be referred to as a positive deviant. In Newfoundland Don Snowden (1983) helped come up with a creative solution to the vertical communication problem. The government wanted to move the residents off Fogo Island to a larger mainland port: the residents wanted to stay. He and Colin Low, a National Film Board (NFB) Director, and crew filmed the residents of the community, urging them to tell their stories and explain why it was so important to them to remain on the island. With prior permission from the residents, the film was taken to the politicians for a screening. Here the politicians learned about the everyday challenges of these residents and their expressed desire to remain on the island. As a result, the politicians learned to ‘listen’ to the community needs and gradually learned to work together to help turn a struggling out-port to a thriving community.
Summary

South Sudan is a state on the margins and needs interveners who can deliver services and act as mediators with an eye to a long-term goal (U.N. News Service 2016). The literature suggests that the citizens (of South Sudan) would benefit in the long run, if they can work with, and be helped by, far-sighted agencies. Despite the potential to make dramatic, paradigm-shifting changes, funding programmes in fragile states comes with large risks. Canada, as we have seen, has demonstrated tendencies to be risk averse (Smillie 2015). Under Canada’s current model for evaluating success, the ability to produce quantifiable results determines if a project has been deemed to be successful. When agencies work in the margins seeking to make qualitative long-term changes they fail to produce the dramatic statistics funders like to see and therefore their ability to provide stable services are greatly diminished.

The most valuable “truffle” that appeared during the literature review was the concept that was used by Snowden and labelled by Martin (2007) as Integrative Thinking. While copying the specific techniques Snowden (1983) employed may not be specifically transferable in today’s society, the Fogo process shows how creative thinking can make meaningful change. Snowden communicated up and down the lines of power, speaking with both the legislators and the people of Fogo Island to find what their key goals and concerns were. Then, through the telling of residents’ stories, ultimately helped facilitate a solution that was acceptable to all parties. It is therefore important to understand how decisions are made (Kahneman 2011) and how the creative process is invoked (Walinga 2010). To examine the question- can we effectively communicate to our government the value of supporting development in a fragile state, we must ask, who do you communicate with and how government decisions are made. The research sought to find examples of these types of interactive communication
initiatives that are effective in bridging the communication gap between NGOs and governments to support fragile states.

Methods and Theories

The Challenges

Traditionally the Methods section of a thesis solely lays out the methodology used and the reasoning behind that decision. In this case, the pursuit of one form of research and the necessity of transferring to another is a case-study that parallels what the research will go on to discover in the discourse analysis and is therefore included here.

The researcher’s intended methodology was Participatory Action Research. The intent was to take on a voluntary position helping out with communication within an NGO already working in South Sudan. It was felt that in working alongside an organization would provide a more focused image their struggles and successes in working with Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the government department that funds international humanitarian and development initiatives. To that end, a research proposal was laid out and potential partner organizations were identified. Emails were sent out and follow-up telephone calls we made to ascertain interest or not.

To establish a baseline with which to compare the association between those working in a fragile state and those who are not, a placement at an NGO working in Ghana was secured. When it came time to examine the issues in fragile states the atmosphere was notably different. Instead of finding organizations interested in taking on a volunteer, the researcher found reticence in returning phone calls
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and emails. According to responses from telephone conversations, a surprising number of organizations were undergoing a restructuring phase at the time of contact and were unable to take on a volunteer. Some of the contacted organizations expressed a desire to work in South Sudan but could not. It was suggested that there was a special relationship between the favoured NGOs that were working in the country, and the government. One NGO referred to the relationship as nepotism, and they said had not been adopted into the Canadian government’s family.

After many calls and emails, one organization was willing to speak bluntly, albeit “unofficially.” It was at this point that the researcher was informed of the difficulty in having a plan approved, and funding secured from the federal government. The organization was unwilling to take even the smallest risk that something may be reported in the research that would jeopardize what they have worked so hard to secure.

Without willing partner organization, proceeding with a PAR methodology was not possible. This generated an unintended finding to an unanticipated research question. How open are organizations who receive GAC funding to outside observation? Is the failure to return emails and phone calls simply a lack of available staff to engage in public relations or is it a form of protectionism. Without a response from these organizations those who did respond suggested the following narrative. It was suggested that the researcher had observed the degree of self-censorship in which some organizations were prepared to engage. Amongst the Canadian NGOs in question, there appeared to be a culture of protectionism, a need to insure that their funding partners did not perceive any level of frustration, nor note any area where there may be problems. If this is true, from an inter-agency perspective this makes sense, if the goal is to build confidence that what is reported back to the donor or ultimately the taxpayer, paints a positive image. If however, the goal is to work to provide a better overall system, and providing funding to a region that is on the edge of ruin, then this ultimately does not allow the NGO to work to its utmost
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efficiency. This also does not allow funding bodies to accurately understand the issues “on-the-ground”, nor is the taxpayer served if they are shown a simplified picture, rather than be truly made aware of the nuanced struggles a fragile nation is facing.

Embracing a New Method

PAR was left behind and the interview methodology embraced. Key informant interviews were sought out from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. While it was appeared that there was “Code of Silence” that extended through a great many of the actors that toil in the South Sudanese drama, finding people to discuss their experience was possible. Of those who were willing to participate in the research process, many would only do so if they were guaranteed anonymity. In order to respect those respondents desiring anonymity, all interviews have been anonymized.

The interviews were kept unstructured in order to allow the interviews to be respondent driven and allow them the flexibility to bring forward the issues they deemed most important.

This research was dependent on individuals making time to participate. A warm thank you must be extended to all who participated. On a disappointing note one Member of Parliament, who sits on a committee that is responsible for overseeing Humanitarian and Development issues in South Sudan, stated that they we not well enough informed on the country to offer any opinion in an interview.

The Interview as a Method

Although interviews are a ubiquitous part of modern North American culture, their use as a method of inquiry is relatively recent and attitudes toward both interviewer and respondent have been through several metamorphoses. When Henry Meyhew began interviewing the working class and the poor in 1861, this form of research was a novel one. The larger academic society had reservations about the competence of the lower classes to articulate their thoughts and ideas. (Gubrium, 2012).
In our current cultural climate, the interview is so pervasive that most people are quite familiar with the general flow and form of the interview process. It has become so commonplace that many people have rehearsed answers to their most commonly asked questions. While participating in interviews may be commonplace Behavioral Science has shed some light on why we may struggle to obtain an accurate picture of a respondent’s core beliefs. Daniel Kahneman (2011) suggests the answer that comes readily to mind is a result of ‘System One’ thinking and the ‘Availability Heuristic.’ The respondent’s answer may be influenced by a memory triggered by the sound of the interviewer’s voice or what they watched on Reality TV the night before. Whether it is a carefully considered answer or the first thought that comes to mind, exterior forces influence way a narrative is formed.

Gubrium and Holstein (2014) suggest that interviews are like a jazz performance. Each player works with, and plays upon, the ideas and themes that come from the other. No two interviews between the same people will be the same because the themes, outside influences and environment will never be exactly the same again.

In forensic interviews there is a belief that rapport is the key to success. The cooperation of the witness is in a delicate balance and the appropriate information gathering technique that must be used (Vrij, Hope, Fisher, 2004). Gubrium and Holstein (2002). This epistemology implies that the respondent is a vessel full of answers. This insinuates that entreating the respondent in the most appropriate way will extract a nugget of truth, untainted from various influences.

Interviewers seek to record images of refracted light. Their respondent passed the initial event through the prism of their heuristics when it was first filed away in memory. When the story is projected back out to the world, it passes through the filter of environment, societal influence and the social influence of the interviewer. The interviewer in turn passes the story they are told through a similar set of filters. While every person may project a different facet of the same subject, in the collecting of the
various perspectives we come to better understand the whole. Faircloth (2014) suggests that the data accumulated from interviews will have the fingerprint of the interviewer - reducing the size of the fingerprint is possible - yet eliminating it is unrealistic.

In order to reduce the influence of the researcher on the respondent the researcher must be careful in the method by which questions are prepared. Yang and Wang (2014) contend that an interviewer must understand that the way they ask a question will direct the way it is answered. Questions looking for a binary yes/no answer preclude context. Asking, “When did you first hear the train rumbling down the track?” assumes that the respondent was aware of a particular train’s arrival. Moreover, the rapport an interviewer builds and the questions that are asked have the ability to allow a respondent the space and sense of empowerment to open up; or conversely, lack of rapport, leading questions and the disempowerment of a respondent has the ability to build walls and trigger defense mechanisms for those engaged in the discourse (Yang & Wang 2012, Lillrank 2012).

Hunter (2011) proposes a researcher must delve into open-sources to become well acquainted with a topic before pursuing the target respondent. He goes on to suggest that a researcher should never have to rely on a respondent for information that is available through open-source channels. This allow the interviewer to engage with the respondent for clarification of issues that have arisen in the public sphere. The type of interview used in this research was what Morse (2012) refers to as an unstructured interview. It is a conversation on a theme. This means that the interviewer allows the respondent the freedom to express their opinions on a subject, and reduces the risk of an interviewer leading the respondent.

All information is delivered and received through the perspective of bias and heuristics (Foley, 2012; Kahneman 2011; Platt, 2012; Rabin, M., & Thaler, R. H. 2001; Talmage, 2012). Through the unstructured interview the researcher suggests a theme, through open-ended questions, and allows the
respondent the emotional space to explore it (Lillrank 2012; Roulston, 2012). In the post interview analysis, not only will the surface information presented by the respondent be analyzed but also the biases and heuristics they present.

It is important to insure the ethical treatment of those who agree to be interviewed. There should not be a time when the sources feel that they have been manipulated or deceived in the interview process nor after the research is completed. (Hanson, Hunter, Thordsen, & Sullivan, 2012). This means being open and upfront about the research intent, allowing those who may be criticized the unfettered ability to respond. Consent is fluid and ongoing. A respondent cannot fully anticipate the way an interview will flow before it starts. They must consent at the beginning and have the right to withdraw at any time (Smythe, & Murray, 2000). To that end the researcher recorded the interviews through field notes and audio recording to ensure accuracy, then asked the respondent to confirm the accuracy of the interview notes before they become integrated into the research. Any notes of clarification from the respondent will amend the field notes that are used in the discourse analysis. If no objections are raised the notes as presented will be entered into the compiled data for processing.

Different individuals will have different levels of comfort in speaking openly in a public manner. Respondents were asked for their consent to have their interview attributed to them. Those who asked for non-attribution, had their interviews filed under an alias and all features that could link the data with the respondent were be redacted. A respondent asking to speak “off-the-record,” meant no part of the interview was be used in the research. Notes were made to inform other interviews, with no reference to the individual. Once the process of interviewing is complete the “off-the-record” interview was destroyed before analysis begins.
Each interview is like a tile in a mosaic and every divergent opinion a different colour; the more tiles that can be seen, the more the picture will make sense. In developing a target sample size, it is more important to pursue broad spectrum of opinions that will expand the view of the mosaic rather than filter out all but a single colour. Not only would examining one point of view not allow for a full understanding of the issue, the researcher could quite fairly be charged with muckraking.

**Interview Format**

It was the intent of the interviewer to make a concerted effort not to bias the answers or views of the respondents. To that end the format of the interview was one of a conversation “with intent.” The respondents were encouraged to discuss their experiences working with and or in South Sudan, along with their opinions of the relationship between the Canadian government and the NGOs working in South Sudan. To that end, there were no predetermined questions apart from the intent to learn “What should I know about the relationship between the Canadian government and the NGOs working in South Sudan?”

**Data Analysis**

Narrative analysis was used to assess the interviews. Once collected. Reissman (2012) suggests that within an interview, themes will emerge, and others will remain conspicuously absent. The collection of analyses was next analyzed for patterns and discrepancies between the texts. It is through this process that a more complete view of the relationship between the Canadian government and NGOs working in fragile states became apparent, including what methods of communication seemed to be effective and which were are not.
Theories

To explore the way in which the Canadian federal government supports the work of NGOs working with fragile states, and especially within South Sudan, this research was conducted and viewed through the prism of the critical research paradigm. This qualitative process ideally lends itself to the examination of multiple viewpoints through the use of targeted interviews. The areas of the research examining the way in which in-groups and out-groups interact, was guided by Gatekeeping Theory and Network Gatekeeping Theory. Finally, Prospect Theory was used to examine how best to interact with the gatekeepers as a route to understanding how and why they make decisions.

Inductive reasoning begins on a theoretical foundation. The access point to controlled information, people or resources is referred to as a gate. Gatekeeping Theory as proposed by Kurt Lewin (1947) tells us that one must understand how a gate functions and how the gatekeeper may be influenced if one wishes to access the controlled substance behind. Since an entourage will control access to the government ministers, and the bureaucracies control their resources, we must consider the points of access to those resources as gates. In the modern age of social media and movement of electronic data there are new gatekeepers with a new type of fence to enclose a resource. This has led to the development of Network Gatekeeping Theory (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009). The relationship between the gatekeeper and the gated is now much more complex. There are more resources available to both the gated and the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper not only protects the gate but also must pacify the gated enough to keep them from breaching the wall.

Prospect Theory examines how and why humans make the decision they do. People in general weigh the potential risks and rewards to any decision they make; however, the mind has difficulty calculating extremes. The more extreme the value the more the mind will draw the probabilities toward an easier-to-understand value. This is why lottery tickets sell well beyond any reasonable expectation of
Like Semaphore in the Dark return, and the suffering of thousands can be downplayed. (Kahneman & Tversky 1979; Kahneman 2011 Mercer 2005). Understanding the decision making process helped illuminate why gatekeepers make the decisions they do, and how those decisions may be influenced

Findings

Respondents and Positions

Ultimately twelve individuals agreed to participate in the research. The individuals were either currently working in the field or had retired within a year of the interview.

In order to ensure anonymity retired versus current employees are not identified. In fact-checking the interviews, additional references were generated. Some of these have been inserted with the respondents’ comments to maintain clarity and veracity.

In order to understand the perspectives of the respondents, the following codes are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Canadian Bureaucrat 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>South Sudanese Bureaucrat 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Canadian Development Service Provider 6: both NGO and Private Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>Sudanese Journalist 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Canadian researcher 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>UE</td>
<td>United Nations Employee 1</td>
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The respondents talked about a broad range of issues. The interviews were unstructured and allowed the respondents the flexibility to talk on topics they deemed of interest. The subtopics in this section were the themes that emerged through the discourse analysis. Ultimately many of the
respondents wanted to discuss the policies of the Canadian government at some point in the interview. In the following section, we will see the disconnect between the direction respondents felt policy should head and that of the government. What is noteworthy is that the topic of capacity building emerged as a significant issue and threaded through many of the interviews.

Social psychology tells us that “Human beings act on their perception of the world” (Hitlin & Pinkston 2013, p.319), and that those perceptions are formed by the environment we are in. It is not surprising that the work we do, and the environments in which we work, shape our perception of a situation. There was a clear from CS6 and CB2 that when decisions are made regarding funding programmes in South Sudan, they are overwhelmingly made in Ottawa, not in the Field Office. CB2 explained how the field office informs Ottawa and puts suggestions forward. It was explained by CS6 that during the Paul Martin government, 2003-2006, that decision makers from consulates around the globe were pulled back to Ottawa as a cost-saving measure. Under the direction of the Harper government, the process of decentralizing began and then for an undisclosed reason stopped. South Sudan’s budgetary decision making remained in Ottawa. The researcher came to understand that the staff from the Ottawa desk visit South Sudan (CB1, CB2 & CB6) but, unlike the ambassador, do not live in Africa and therefore are not so readily accessible to the South Sudanese
It is appropriate to start with the one theme that all the respondents agreed upon. South Sudan is in an awkward position at the moment. How close to the edge of viability they are engendered a wide spectrum of opinion. Opinions seemed dependent on an individual’s perception of the country and the process by which the flow of events is predictable or not. SJ reported having heard one leader exclaim “How can we who tore the country apart be the ones to rebuild it?” This end of the spectrum is echoed through comments made by the chairperson of the Political Parties Youth Forum, Agel Riing Machar, in the South Sudanese media: “The status-quo is unsustainable and the current leadership in the country is too deformed to be reformed and therefore there is an urgent and pressing need of a total revolutionary overhaul of the system,” (Top South Sudan youth, 2017). The other end of the spectrum is represented by CS5 who suggests that this is part of the growing pains of a newly minted country. This individual compared the trajectory of South Sudan to that of Bangladesh. Both are countries that grew out of conflict. It has taken 50 years for Bangladesh to break-free of its fragile status and become what it is today: a country that, while it still requires a great deal of progress, is at a “good enough” stage.

Regardless of the respondent’s view of the government or the country’s trajectory for development, all the respondents agreed that the people of South Sudan are in a very difficult situation.
CS1 reported that up to half of the South Sudanese population had been displaced from their homes, whether through food insecurity or conflict. Larry Elliot (2017) of *the Guardian* reported that 2 million people have already crossed the border from South Sudan to Uganda. This figure does not include those who are internally displaced and those who have gone to other neighbouring countries. The UN has reported that half of the South Sudanese population is food insecure (New Nation, New Famine, 2017).

**Programme Funding.**

During preliminary research on Canadian support of South Sudan, it was difficult to find data to show significant financial support that matched the rhetoric pledging aid. While it seems peculiar that this information was buried fairly deeply in GAC’s website, research did show that the Canadian Federal government is heavily funding programmes in South Sudan. The government of Canada’s report on international assistance, declares that CAD 122.2 million was targeted to South Sudan in the 2014-15 fiscal period and 91.03 million in 2015-16 fiscal period (Government of Canada, n.d., a & b). UE directed the researcher to where relevant data could be found on Canada’s involvement in UN programming. As of October 29, 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (OHCA) reported that Canada had donated 608.7 million US dollars to the UN’s on-going South Sudanese Humanitarian efforts (Financial Tracking Service, n.d.). The researcher was informed by CS6 and CB2, reported that the Canadian government is primarily concerned with funding humanitarian programmes. CB1 explained that because of the conflict some donors have pulled back their development support and have focused on humanitarian aid. It was suggested by CS5 that the Canadian government is risk averse, and not prepared to work with the South Sudanese government on development. It was further suggested that while it is difficult to reward a government that is harming its people, the view that the government is full of criminals and eschewing all interaction with them, isn’t going to give you enough influence to improve the situation. CS6 that the Canadian government had
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instructed them not to engage with the South Sudanese government in development projects. CS4 described the failure of GAC to fund development in opposition-held territories. The opinions expressed by the respondents in this research indicated there is a great deal of debate over the most effective allocation of funds.

In the case of South Sudan, both CB1 and CS3 explained Canadian government does not typically set out an agenda and send out a Call For Proposals. The primary method that an organization’s programme will receive funding is through the Unsolicited Proposals track. They both continued to explain that an NGO will have a general idea about the direction that GAC wants to go and propose a project that will parallel the direction they believe the government wants to head. Once a proposal is put forward it undergoes a review. CB1 and CB2 made it clear that in an attempt to be fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars, a cost/benefit analysis is done to determine that the government is getting the “best bang for the buck.” To ensure that their money isn’t wasted in such a volatile environment the organization must show its emergency response plan along with how they will continue, if the region they are in becomes too unstable. If an organization produces a three-year proposal the government would like to see the risk spread out and the ability to transfer the resources from one location to another rapidly. Because South Sudan is so unstable, most evacuation plans will require the use of an aircraft. Small NGOs are usually confined to working in one region and do not have the ability to be rapidly mobile and are thus precluded from much of the work in this region. The government is not closed to the idea of a small NGO working in this theatre, but they must show they have the skills to be working there. CB2 used the analogy of soccer divisions to explain an NGO’s acceptance to operate in a tenuous theatre; saying that, you have to prove you are at the top of your game in the B division before you can be expected to play well in the Premier League.
CB2 went on to explain that the Canadian embassy has a “duty of care” responsibility towards Canadian nationals. One problem in carrying out that responsibility in South Sudan is the Canadian government does not operate aircraft and helicopters and does not have the ability to do an emergency extraction. If you travel in South Sudan you have to know how you are going to get out. The fear for the safety of workers is intensely legitimate. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 2013, 80 humanitarian workers have been killed. The Canadian bureaucracy is intimately aware of the risks in operating in such a volatile region. *The National Post* reported that on June 23rd, 2017, Nick and Jennifer Coghlan received the Meritorious Service Cross for their efforts in extracting approximately 300 Canadian’s out of South Sudan when the civil war ignited in 2013 (Crawford, 2017). In South Sudan arriving at an agreed-upon statement of events can be difficult, even an emergency extraction in the face of a civil war can be cause for division. South Sudanese journalist Mading Ngor (2017b) refuted the statement of events on which the award was based.

In their recent report on building capacity in fragile states, Cowater Sogema (2017) reported on the challenges and the additional costs associated with operating in such a theatre. Perhaps the most obvious one is the substantial costs associated with security. These include the hiring of security personnel, the hard costs associated with keeping their staff and programme participants safe and the soft costs of security training. In addition to security costs, there are participant support costs. They reported that within the context of the fragile state, the ability of a government to pay its staff is limited. Many government employees continue to work even though they are not receiving an income. This
means many of those targeted to receive training require a stipend to able to attend. This has led to fewer participants completing the training sessions than anticipated. In some cases a lack of income has also limited the indigenous trainer’s ability to attend, leading to unscheduled pauses in the programme.

Those who are being funded have varying attitudes about the process. As noted earlier an implementing agency will only have a general idea as to the direction that GAC is going when they make a proposal. It should be noted that many of the respondents felt that the government should put its cards clearly on the table for everyone to see.

CS3 said working with the federal government is like being a housing contractor. The client comes in and says “I want to build a house.” When the contractor asks if the client has blueprints, they say no. When the contractor asks what style of house they would like, the client says “I can’t tell you.” When asked about the budget, the client says “I can’t tell you.” You have to sneak around and see what the client is doing elsewhere and then make a guess about what they might like here. You spend a great deal of time and resources drawing up a blueprint and budget to make a presentation. After the presentation, the client will accept or reject your plan according to their secret guidelines. If they reject your plan you’ve wasted a good deal of resources. The feedback you get might help you modify the plan, but it’s a game that doesn’t have to be played. It suggests that the government does not have clear goals and benchmarks to direct their resources toward. A system is left in place where an implementing agency attempts to sell their vision for programming in a region, to a bureaucracy that has a secret set of guidelines and may or may not have its own vision for that particular region. With no publically declared plan, there can be no coordinated effort among agencies to work toward a common goal.

CS6 felt that the issues surrounding South Sudan required a fine and nuanced discussion. When you are trying to build systems it’s hard to put your finger on what you do and show the funders, both governments and individuals, a “smiling child” photograph. It’s hard for the “Street” to grasp what’s
going on. They went on to say that this is why it is difficult for governments to explain to taxpayers the value development work. People understand going next-door and giving their neighbour a hand. It’s hard for funders to get excited about a photograph of politicians at a workshop. The concept of capacity building is one that is difficult to grasp without a nuanced discussion.

Whether it is the attitude of those inside the government or not, there is a perception among many of the respondents that those on the implementation side of the equation are seen as supplicants that must work to fill the government’s agenda within an election cycle and produce that “smiling child” photograph. Frustration was expressed over the political agenda to which the implementing agencies must tailor their work (CS1, CR).

Several respondents noted that they would like to work with the government to set priorities and strategies as one would with a peer rather than as a contractor fulfilling a task. Multiple respondents talked about the intelligence gathering an NGO can provide regarding a region or a group they are working with. One respondent relayed how vastly underutilized the NGO community is when the government tries to understand a region. They noted as an example that, NGOs that have been working in a region know who the corrupt officials are and the ones who are trying to build for the future.

**Timelines**

There is a feeling among many of the respondents that even if they did know exactly what the government wanted, the timelines they are given restrict activities in such a manner as to be an...
ineffectual way to pursue sustainable development work. CS1, CS3, CS5 and CS6 expressed frustration in the short timelines they are required to work within.

A project that has a window of two to three years means that one year was used in getting the project going, six months to wind it down leaving six to eighteen months to execute the project. In terms of farming that limits the operation to a maximum of two or three growing seasons. While the estimated duration required to make a substantive impact varied from person to person there was a general agreement that South Sudan was at least 15 to 20 years away from stabilizing. When agencies are expected to put up proposals in two to three year timeframes that suggests a minimum of five to eight planning cycles. This contrasts dramatically with how the Chinese engage in planning (CS1, CS6). In spite of the region’s lack of stability the Chinese are heavily invested in African development projects and have embarked on plans that have a vision for the next 50 – 100 years (Morlin-Yron 2017; Smaller, Wei, & Yalan, 2012). CS1 explained that western democracies are hamstrung by election cycles. This inevitably limits projects to the required photo ops and project deliverables can be produced within that window. For Western democracies that think in terms of election cycles, planning 50 years ahead is far too long to be palatable.

There were several respondents (CS1, CS5 and CS6) that suggested projects that had a 15 – 20 year time frame would allow real progress to be made in a particular region. SJ clearly suggested that this generation of leaders learned how to govern as guerrilla leaders would not be able to lead the country into reform. The hope for South Sudan’s future will lie in the next generation of people who are trained to take up leadership positions (CS1, CS6). That would mean focusing on developing capacity in the young people of today, so they can take on the responsibility of moving the country forward in 10 years’ time. CS5 felt that donors who institute a 4+4 policy are able to have a real impact. Projects that
are substantially funded for 4 years with an eye to funding it for another 4 if benchmarks are met, allow for a stable platform on which solid developments can be made. When the Canadian government provides funding, they passively affirm that the plan set forward has a reasonable assurance that is it safe to do so (CB2). Because of the extreme volatility in the country GAC has asked that proposals be limited to two to three years in length (CB1). While this allows for a more rapid change of focus in a volatile environment, CS1 was quite clear in stating that, there can be no capacity building where support is capricious.

The division between those who were risk-adverse and those who promoted long-term planning generally fell along the lines of those who held the keys to the vault and those who were implementing programmes. Canadians who were funding projects tended to be more risk-averse than those who were implementing them. As seen above in the case of Chinese development the culture of a governmental institution, has an effect on the level of risk a funder is comfortable with.

**Political Geography: The Context**

When respondents expressed the difficulties of working in South Sudan there were recurring comments and themes. In many cases, the respondents expressed the challenges of choosing between two difficult options. Operating in South Sudan is a context where:
• The World Food Programme expects bandits to confiscate large amounts of food aid; and yet, does not want an armed guard to protect the food stores.

• To stay and pull oil from the ground, fuels a conflict with your home government and shareholders, while pulling out, opens the door for less scrupulous companies to take over, where Human Rights abuses and Environmental Destruction are ignored.

• Farmers may be afraid to work in the fields when there are enemy combatants nearby, and yet a peacekeeping force may be perceived as neo-colonialism.

• Enthusiastic governments may allow money to flow into a country un-scrutinized to lubricate negotiations with the government.

• The leaders of a country recently came out of the bush as guerilla fighters, with no national leadership experience and skills to take on the running of a country.

• The money that flows in from oil extractions appears to flow into private bank accounts.

South Sudanese Political Structure

The Republic of South Sudan is a presidential republic. The name of the country has been shortened from the Arabic bilad-as-sudan, the land of the black people.

The country gained its independence on July 9, 2011 under democratically elected president Salva Kiir Mayardit. The first set of elections post-independence were slated for 2015; however, the ongoing conflict with the country had postponed the election until 2018.

The country is divided up in to 32 states under the care of 29 ministries. Those states are further divided into Payam and Payam into Boma, the base political unit in the country.

(Kiir announces, 2011; Wei, 2017; CIA, n.d.)
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- To work with a troubled government is seen as supporting bad behaviour, and to circumvent the government retards growth, development and political influence.

It is in the face of these challenges that a communication plan must be established to help a risk-averse Canadian government understand the value of funding programmes in South Sudan. Whether implementing organizations are directly touched by the conflict or not, the conflict is influencing who is working in the region and what they are able to do.

By all accounts, the conflict in South Sudan is breaking down along ethnic lines (CB2, CR, CS6 and SJ). Originally the conflict was between the Dinka and Nu’er, the two main ethnic groups in the country. It was noted by more than one respondent that the conflict is not a long-standing one (CB1, CS2, SB and SJ). Before the division of Sudan, the people in the south of Sudan were united against a common northern enemy and fought together. It was after there was no longer a common enemy that groups began looking inward and finding differences and divisions. The respondents noted that what is happening among the South Sudanese is what was previously occurring between the north and the south in the former united Sudan. CS1 noted that the conflict was predictable and both the UN and the NGOs working in the region were aware of the distinct possibility an eruption of violence. It should be noted that this pattern follows classic Freirean theory. Paulo Freire (2000) wrote Pedagogy of the Oppressed in 1968 explaining how the oppressed become the oppressor, in what is considered by many to be a seminal pedagogical text,

The repercussions of the conflict have been numerous, from farmers afraid to work in their fields for fear of not coming home (CS6, SJ) to donors restricting their support of government programmes and by-passing official channels to work directly with NGOs, contractors and UN partner organizations (CS1, CS6).
Humanitarian Aid and Sovereignty: Do NGOs Make Things Worse?

Are the humanitarian organizations inadvertently making the conflict worse? There are some conflicting opinions depending if you are delivering aid or not. More than one source confirmed that food convoys are the only safe and cost-effective way to transport aid (CB2, CS4 and CS6). Unfortunately, convoys are possible only in the dry season and compete with local markets that are attempting to sell what humanitarian agencies are giving away. Airdrops are also used (CB2, CS4); however, their cost is enormous, and the parachutes attract both civilians and armed combatants to the landing area. Except for one bandit-infested highway, the Juba-Nimule Road, all other roads are dirt and are impassible with a truck during the rainy season (CB2, CS6 and SJ). When a convoy does head-out to deliver aid they constantly run into unauthorized roadblocks (CB2). Armed insurgents will demand a toll for passing. When the bandits take their cut to allow the convoy passage and they continue down the road to next road-block. It is an accepted cost of doing business that half of the aid that starts down the road is lost to tolls. CB2 explained that those who work on the humanitarian side are reticent about having food associated with guns. Denis Danis (2017) of South Sudan’s Eye radio news reported that there are discussions underway for the Ugandans to take over the security of the Juba – Nimule road; however, this could prove to be an untenable solution to a government afraid of losing its sovereignty.

In spite of the struggles South Sudan is having keeping peace within its borders, sovereignty is a major topic of concern whenever other nations become involved (Olouch, 2017). At the beginning of the research for this paper the researcher expected to hear calls for an expanded peace-making force. The discussion of a nation’s sovereignty versus having the UN become a nanny to the state only came up in discussions when respondents were directly asked. There were decidedly mixed feeling about the value
of the United Nation’s Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS). CB2 mentioned that it is possible to have a fully functional peace-making force, yet there is no public appetite for the sight of soldiers returning home in body bags. CS6 declared that as far as could be seen, the current UN force has no desire to get involved in enforcing peace. They are restricted to guarding a few compounds while the conflict rages around them, and they rarely go out beyond the wire.

CS1 referred to the way aid is being delivered in South Sudan, by the NGO community, is as though they are Fire Fighters running around the country trying to extinguish blazes. Every respondent talked of the massive amount of need in the country. CS6 made an analogy to the situation in South Sudan as like being in a leaky boat that has been pushed out to sea. When the water is coming in fast the occupants spend their time bailing so hard to keep from sinking that no one is watching where the boat is going

One of the criticisms of the firefighting method of delivering services to a country corresponds to the chaos left behind when an NGO pulls out and runs to put out the next fire (CR, CS1). Members of the Canadian bureaucracy (CB1, CB2) made it clear that they prefer to work with NGOs that have the flexibility to quickly move from one region to the next if one area becomes insecure. Those who are critical of this type of delivery, say that in reality the large NGOs that have the flexibility to move around the country are going to the regions where the needs are the greatest, but by leaving, create an unstable social environment. One cynical respondent (CS1) suggested the worst-hit areas had the best media coverage and, thereby when servicing that region, produce the best fundraising opportunities back home. These attitudes show the massive dichotomy in

“Capacity building is key. It doesn’t matter how many people we save from famine, how many people are cured from malaria or how many women’s groups we establish, without capacity building, it all falls on its face in the end.”
– Glen Pearson, personal communication September 13, 2017
Like Semaphore in the Dark

the discourse. To remain in a dangerous place, puts the organization’s people in harm’s way, to leave, creates an environment where those you have been helping could be put in harm’s way.

If the needs are greater in one region of South Sudan, why shouldn’t an organization move to that region? Nothing else is working in the country so the NGOs are needed to take up the slack. There were opinions expressed that implementing agencies were being encouraged to go where the needs are the greatest (CS1, CS2). This is a strategy that appears to be encouraged by the Canadian government. The problem isn’t that the needs of one community have not been adequately reduced before the agency leaves. The problem is the power vacuum that is left behind when an NGO pulls out of a region (CR, CS1). NGOs are triaging the great needs of the country. The large NGOs have the flexibility to move with great speed around the country, targeting the regions where the needs are the greatest. While this appears to be an effective approach to best utilize their resources, the indigenous NGOs that are left behind find themselves in trouble with the sudden vacuum.

There is general consent among the respondents that the problem in South Sudan is massive. There were also many respondents who said not enough resources are being allocated to fix the problem. The Humanitarian needs are enormous and three of the respondents (CS1, CS4 & CS6) noted that donors are reticent about backing support for a famine that was caused through government actions. CS4 felt that the South Sudanese government was using the famine as a means of population control. Should NGOs focus on feeding people or helping them establish farms? Those involved in Humanitarian work feel it is inhumane to require a development aspect to Humanitarian work. Others are saying that if all you are doing is Humanitarian work, you are not building for the Future.
Child Soldiers

CR and SB referred to the dire economic situation in the country, as the fuel that feeds the conflict’s fire. There are two factors that help populate the ranks of the combatant’s platoons. While tribalism may be one, the major draw for recruiting is, that the army is in control of the bulk of the country’s resources. If you can’t find work or food the army will give that to you. When an individual’s needs are not being met, it is natural to look for places where they will (CS5). This includes children. CS1 referred to the presence of child soldiers, explaining that, necessity is the chain that pulls children through the factory. It produces boys who are soldiers and sexually exploited girls. They explained that once a child soldier is created, it takes $30 – $40,000 and a period of three and a half to four years to rehabilitate them. When it is much cheaper to provide for the needs of the children and their families than it is to rehabilitate the soldiers back into society, CS1 asked why preventative measures are not more enthusiastically pursued.

Both SB and CS1 talked of young people entering the military. SB suggested that it was because they had nothing else to do. CS1 told the researcher that the some people in North America have the idea that children are being snatched from their home and forced into the army. While this makes a wonderfully dramatic image; however, it doesn’t paint an accurate picture of the issue. Snatching may have happened on an infrequent basis, but the majority of people who entered the army did so because they felt they must do so to survive.

Dancing With Your Antagonist

When expressing opinions regarding solutions to the conflict, and whether or not Canadians should be involved with the South Sudanese government, respondents generally fell into one of two camps. In one camp were those who felt that the South Sudanese needed to put down their arms before
there should be any dealings with the government. In this camp, there is no desire to see development projects lost to the conflict, and suggests they should be put on hold until a peace can be held. The Canadian bureaucracy (CB1, CB2) falls into this camp. CS6 suggested that this system of belief is quite widespread, and as such, has led to a country that is run by NGOs and bypasses the government for all intents and purposes.

There is a contrary opinion that believes that “need” is the fuel that gives heat and power to the fire of conflict (CR, CS5 & SB). Without addressing the needs and concerns of the population, there is nothing to lose and much to gain through the conflict. It is this backdrop that fosters the concern to engage in solid development projects that engender long-term sustainable growth. There is a feeling that without communication there is no influence on the government and the development of good governance that leads to growth (CS6). More than one respondent noted that prevention is critically important and far cheaper than dealing with the fallout of an issue when it has erupted (CR, CS1). It was additionally pointed out that as the issues surrounding the South Sudanese conflict progress, there is an ever-increasing complexity in the situation, and the difficulty of finding a road out more difficult (CB2, CS2).

There was some disagreement over the link between development and peace. In one camp there is a concern that in a conflict, pouring resources into a region when your project might just get blown up wasn’t fiscally responsible (CB1, CB2). On the other side were those that felt development is key to the peace process (CR; Grindle, 2002; World Bank, 2017 & SB). There is a conflict over resources. While a lack of resources may not cause the fire to erupt, it is the fuel that causes the conflict to burn hotter and brighter than it would otherwise. Broad-based sustainable development reduces ethnic conflict. When there are more resources, people think about what a conflict will cost them. When there are no resources, people brood about the differences between their neighbours and themselves. CS1 claimed that the
required developments costs to bring the country to a “good enough” state are so high that funding
governments are not willing to admit that the road they are on will be a long and expensive one and are
thereby increasing the cost and duration of growth and lengthening the time of conflict.

There are two camps that seem entrenched in their opinion of working with the Sudanese
government. One says we must withhold our support of the government in order to push them to begin
house cleaning. Respondents claim that the position of the Canadian government is, that they will not
work with the South Sudanese government as long as it is at war with its citizens. There is another
distinct group who believes that without dialogue with the South Sudanese government you cannot help
the country move forward. How to clean a house must be taught, it doesn’t come instinctually.

There were also those respondents who differentiated between the executive branch of the
Sudanese governments and the ministries (CS6, SJ). Those respondents felt that the problem was with
the South Sudanese executive branch of the government and that helping the line ministries (such as the
Ministry of Finance and Economic and the Ministry of General Education and Instruction) develop
capacity and is not necessarily a political act.

CS6 explained that the Ministry of Agriculture has not had international assistance since 2012.
NGOs are filling the needs as they see best, but it is happen at the local level. They are helping farmers
grow food and teach skills. The problem, it was suggested, is that there is no coordinating body that
standardized the methods used around the country. One system of farming is being taught by one NGO
and an incompatible method is being taught to another group of farmers in another region. In this system
when the government does manage to start running their own affairs there will be regions that will find
themselves at a disadvantage because agricultural policy will not align with the systems they have been
taught. Working at a national or state level to make improvements allows the tide to rise and all boats
with it (CR, CS5 & CS6).
Of the respondents who advocated for national level coordination (CR) suggested the other problem with small randomly placed projects is simply one of jealousy. When an NGO selects one community to receive aid, why are they more deserving than the one next door? One community can boast with pride that they are getting the new programme or development, leaving the other one to seethe with jealousy. CS1 noted that when the NGO pulls out of the community there are no outside eyes watching out for the development left behind and the project can be seconded to another purpose or intent.

If we take the analogy of the boat from above to summarize the ideas expressed in this section, we could say South Sudan is like a boat that people were fighting over for so long, that it became unseaworthy. When Western democratic governments mediated an agreement to give the people their boat, they pushed them inside, towed them out to sea and said, “Today you begin the journey toward your destiny, good luck.” The Captain and officers had never been on a boat before, the engine didn’t work and the vessel wasn’t seaworthy. NGOs and consultants come by to help. Instead of training the officers how to run all the affairs of this massive ship, pushed them aside and did it themselves. The people on board are starving and bored so they mutinied and started fighting amongst themselves. The resources to fix the boat and train the officers and crew never arrived. Capacity building is required to make the vessel seaworthy and to develop competence in the crew.

**Capacity Building**

Capacity development is the process by which individuals, organizations, institutions and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems and set and achieve objectives. It needs to be addressed at three inter-related levels: individual, institutional and societal.

“Specifically, capacity-building encompasses the country’s human, scientific, technological, organizational, and institutional and resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity-
building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of environment potentials and limits and of needs perceived by the people of the country concerned”.


A Lighthouse Programme: Excellence in Capacity Building

The single theme that struck a consistent chord with the respondents was that of capacity building. Within the discussion, the programme that was cited as an example of capacity building done right was the Physician Training programme instituted by Samaritan’s Purse (CB2, CR, CS2, SB). Samaritan’s Purse Canada is an organization that is heavily involved in delivering humanitarian aid in South Sudan. They are also implementing Livelihood Training programmes with South Sudanese, both those internally displaced persons in the region of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and the refugees in Northern Uganda. Many of the respondents referred to the Samaritan Purse’s project to re-train the “Cuban Juban” doctors as an ideal method of building capacity.

During the Sudanese civil war, before separation, many of those in the south of Sudan had fled to refugee camps to escape the conflict. This arduous journey was detailed in the movie, God Grew Tired of Us. In 1996 the Cuban government took approximately 600 South Sudanese children and teenagers from Ethiopia and took them to Cuba, where they were housed and educated (Wheeler, 2008).

Finlay (2015), reports that the Cuban training programme, which educated children from many countries, was never intended to integrate the students into Cuban society but rather to return them to their home countries. When it became clear that returning the Sudanese to Sudan or its neighbouring
countries was untenable, the UN was asked to aid in third country placements. Canada stepped up and opened its doors to the students.

the majority of those who had trained as physicians in Cuba wanted to upgrade their skills and return to help the South Sudanese. The researcher was informed that the Canadian government was wary of their intentions and refused to help. In 2006 Samaritan’s Purse aided in the development of a programme known as SSHARE, South Sudan Health Accessibility Rehabilitation and Education Project. Partnering with the University of Calgary the organization developed a training programme that would suit their needs. Of the 15 physicians who entered the programme, 11 returned to work in South Sudan, increasing the number of active physicians in the country by more than 20% (Crutcher et al, 2015). After their time in Calgary, they first went to Kenya for additional training, before returning to South Sudan. From the time the Cubans recruited them for schooling until the time they returned home again 20 years had elapsed.

Several of the respondents expressed how education and capacity building are key to the country’s advancement (CS1, CS4, CS5 & SB). CS1 suggested that NGOs could either identify Canadian South Sudanese who desire to return and help educate them, or identify people currently living in South Sudan and educate those people. If bringing leaders to Canada is untenable then instituting training in neighbouring African countries may be more palatable.
Capacity Building Through the Development of Good Governance

Marilee Grindle (2002, 2011) of Harvard University has extensively explored the link between good governance and development building. She explains that when scholars noted a reduction in poverty levels in regions with good governance, they began to compile a list of indicators that would show a state has appropriate policies. While there are definite links between the two, to demand adherence to the indicators of good governance from a fragile state is as burdensome as cleaning the Augean Stables. It may be possible but will require a Herculean effort that is impractical to the point of impossibility. To make matters worse, Grindle (2011) explains how, by taking a patriarchal stand and imposing solutions on a country rather than working with them so they “own” the solution, the development of Good Governance is undercut.

Grindle (2011) goes on to suggest that, those who have the farthest to go, will be the ones that are the most difficult to work with. It is not easy and there are no magic bullets. Capacity building must be conducted on some kind of foundation and every state, no matter how fragile, has some form of foundation to build on. It is critical for the development architects look closely at what they are planning to build upon and match the structure to the foundation, then make plans to develop a larger more secure foundation.

In an earlier paper Grindle (2002) suggests that not all good governance markers are created equally and that through the examination of the current political landscape there will come to light some efforts that will lead to a bigger payoff than others. To encourage a fragile state to develop a solid modern system of governance, it is necessary to set reasonable goals that include realistic timelines that reward movement in the right direction.
Linking Capacity Building with Peace

The World Bank has embraced the concept of linking peace with development through its LOGOSEED project in South Sudan (World Bank, 2017). It is seeking to engage communities in the planning of development projects at the payam, and boma levels of governance.

There is some debate over whether or not peace should come prior to or is a product of development. LOGOSEED is a project funded by the World Bank and Denmark and works in partnership with the South Sudanese government. It is an initiative that is aimed at building both capacity and peace in South Sudan by targeting county governments. By working with the South Sudanese government, the goal of the World Bank (Projects, n.d.) is to work 4 key areas

1. To engage the local population in the planning process while being sensitive to issues that spark conflict.
2. To improve the capacity and functionality of the local county government in a hands-on learning approach.
3. To establish a grant system for payam development projects.
4. Project management

This will be done through block payments to counties for local payams to be used in infrastructure building according to the community’s expressed need for a Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. The local citizens will be engaged in defining their priorities, planning and implementation of the project. It has an aim to teach local governments, at county, payam and boma levels, the rudiments of Project management along with environmental and social safeguards.

Cowater Sogema (2017) reported their involvement in LOGOSEED had enabled six states to bring their governance indicators up to the minimum national standards.
While CS5 was unaware of the Peace Building link the World Bank had envisioned with the project. They had however, seen the project in action and noted the increase in capacity of the local governments to manage their own affairs and thereby access more sources of funding for their communities.

Conclusion

This paper explores the discourse around South Sudan and the various positions different parties hold. In the exploration of what is being said, areas for further research possibilities are opened up and areas where advocacy may be needed or a new dialogue around policy could be explored. The research around policy is too thin to make recommendations but respondents positions are echoed as potential touch-points where the discussion could begin. As suggested earlier, the hesitancy of speaking openly suggests there is at least some degree of fear regarding blow-back from a respondent’s key-stakeholders. In many cases the largest stakeholder is GAC and one informant clearly stated that could not risk any potential conflict with the department.

While the respondents had a variety of attitudes toward the state of affairs in South Sudan and what should be done to alleviate the problem, there were several themes that came to the foreground. The country of South Sudan has a dearth of governance capacity. Those who spent a lifetime fighting for their community have maintained the same mindset in the method they use to deal with their neighbours. The conflict is sapping the little resources contained within the country, to attempt to gain control of the region. While the leadership of the county at the executive level attempts to fortify their positions, the general population is undergoing a massive amount of suffering.
When the concept of communication was first introduced in this paper a question was posed asking who are the gatekeepers are and how are decisions made. Decision makers were found within the Canadian Bureaucracy but none of the elected officials who are tasked to deal with the country, either responded or could offer an opinion on development in South Sudan. In many organizations, the gatekeepers would not open the door to engage in conversation about their work in South Sudan. While it is understandable that within a resource-constrained organization, or within the office of a time-constrained elected official, engaging in external communication with the public is a luxury, it allows others to drive the narrative. In 1956 Jim Lowe recorded *The Green Door*. In this song, he talks about hearing the sounds of a party on the other side of the door and not being able to get anyone to open it. In many ways, the lack of external communication parallels the frustration of protagonist in this song and does not allow the cry of nepotism to be challenged. Not opening the door means those on the outside are reduced to speculation.

It was made clear that the respondents did not see any meaningful communication between the Republic of South Sudan and the Canadian government. It was also made clear that the decision-making process was conducted in Ottawa and not in the African state. The researcher was informed that there is no official South Sudanese representation in Canada and the US ambassador has been targeted to maintain ties to Canada (SB). The former website for the South Sudanese mission to Canada, http://www.gosscanada.org/, appears as a dead link in browsers. Several respondents have claimed, and the optics would seem to support, that Canada has inserted itself into South Sudanese affairs without input from upper levels of governance in the “host” country. If as respondents have suggested, that Canada has an

“*It is therefore clear that achieving sustainable impact in fragile state environments is neither easy nor cheap. But experience shows it is possible, and development partners know it is crucial if the international community is to make significant strides towards reducing poverty among the world’s bottom billion.*”

Cowater Sogema, 2017
entrenched position not to work with a government at war with its people, then research on new and creative, “third path” solutions need to be explored that allow a face-saving means of communicating. On Fogo Island, the Government took the position that the residents were to move. Had they maintained a rigid stance the elegance of the final solution would not have come to light. The stakes in South Sudan are higher, and yet, creative “Snowden-esque” solutions are needed to establish nation to nation lines of communication and a third path option that allow development to move forward.

There was a clear call from many respondents for the Government to establish more transparent lines of communication, to make their goals public and the process for developing those goals more inclusive. Clarity of communication with the public and Canadian Service providers around goals and contacts would achieve several positive outcomes. It would allow those who fail to attain a contract to understand why and mute the charge of nepotism. It would allow a service provider to focus their efforts on creating the best programme for the government’s stated goal, rather than making assumptions and wasting resources on initiatives that have no chance of success.

It was reiterated that it is very difficult to have a nuanced discussion with the general public about how resources are being spent. There is a chasm between the government’s project timelines and those the service providers claim they need to have a practical impact. It may be that there is a need to develop a mechanism within the government that establishes long-term goals, with clear benchmarks and then monitors how those objectives are being reached. There was an expression of frustration with the lack of consistency from one government to the next. This is an area around which a policy discussion would need to occur. This may entail an all-party commitment from the politicians to allow a body to work within a framework without requiring a change with the ascension to power of each subsequent government minister.
Was the opinion expressed that the Canadian government only funding politically safe programmes that deliver a reasonable expectation of a return on investment as an expedient way to appear humane to their voter base? On several occasions, the problem of appealing to the sensibilities of the taxpayer was relayed. Many stressed that a nuanced discussion around subtleties of working in a fragile state is very difficult to have while there is a need to show fiscal responsibility. If this is indeed the case, then more research needs to be conducted in methods of delivering these specific messages. The literature review showed how Behavioral Economics has served to make messages more coherent. Research may also be needed on the generation of a non-partisan governance committee that has a mandate which exceeds one election cycle in the same manner by with the Canadian Senate is expected to provide a less capricious decision-making environment. If research can show that long-term planning is important to responsible decision making then developing a solid interagency and external communication policy to provide guidelines for both agencies to establish programmes and the public to understand the trajectory of government policy around South Sudan.

With funder driven priorities and short-term outlooks, respondents expressed an opinion that funds were being wasted for the sake of political expediency. There was a strong note among several respondents that without long-term planning with an eye to developing capacity, South Sudan would remain in a state of fragility. The need for long-term planning was explored in the literature review when examining comments made by former World Bank Senior Civil Society Specialist, Michael Edwards (1999). We further saw that these plans should not be deterred by inevitable short-term struggles (Smillie, 2015). We have seen contrasting views when examining the discourse around such projects. On one side, there is the need to enshrine risk aversion for the sake of sound financial management, and on the other side, how in the long-run risk aversion is leading to the greater wastage of both human and financial resources.
One of the goals of this paper was to seek out Lighthouse Institutions that provide solid examples of projects that have shown themselves to be exceptional to facilitate a positive discussion toward future advocacy discussions. Looking at ideas that new and creative ways to come at a problem can, as Martin (2007) and Walinga (2015) suggest, facilitate more productive and nuanced discussions toward more effective solutions. The physician training undertaken by Samaritan’s Purse was held up as an example of how capacity building could be done within Canada. Samaritan’s Purse identified unutilized capacity within Alberta’s South Sudanese community and then began a negotiation process that helped connect the physicians with the University of Calgary. Therefore, the process that was initiated by the Cuban government was completed through a partnership between the University of Calgary and a Canadian based NGO. Enhancing the skills of the South Sudanese doctors proved to be highly beneficial. Several respondents suggested that capacity building through education was the key to South Sudan moving forward. When Cuba initially took in the children to be educated it was with the understanding that they were on a mission to help improve their country. For those who are leery of the desire of a well-educated person to return to a country in turmoil, these doctors demonstrated there may be ways to instill national pride in one’s home country and a desire to make it better.

Respondents expressed that there is an overwhelming need to deliver humanitarian aid and build capacity. To forego humanitarian efforts in order to build capacity in the region, would condemn mass numbers of people to death. To only provide humanitarian relief would not help farmers return to work nor develop a government with the skills it requires to go forward on its own. Education was identified as a way of building capacity in South Sudan while training the next generation of leaders.

It was clearly explained that without capacity building it will be necessary to continue providing humanitarian aid at infinitum. Capacity building is a long process and requires “buy-in” from the people who are being served. By identifying where they feel capacity first needs to be developed allows them to
engage with the process. Sometimes, as the World Bank has done, tying training to development projects is a soft way to help a community understand the importance of engaging. As Don Snowden did on Fogo Island *listening* to those who are the beneficiaries of a programme *before* developing services allows those affected to “own” the solution. Samaritan’s Purse did just that. They engaged in *Positive deviancy* when they listened to the Albertan South Sudanese then looked for creative ways to engage in capacity building with them.

The research confirmed that there is a small “club” of those who are implementing programmes in South Sudan. The government position is that they are the best qualified to operate in such a dangerous theatre. Because of the lack of transparency in the Canadian government’s goals and objectives, it is hard to nullify the concerns of small NGOs who feel they have the potential to deliver effective programming, but, because they do not have access to government “insider information,” can’t figure out where the Canadian government is heading. To clear the charge of nepotism, the Gatekeepers would only need to be more transparent in communicating their goals and criteria. Respondents who did manage to attain government funding complained of a process through which a great deal of energy and resources are expended groping around in the dark.

Can we effectively communicate to the Canadian government the value of supporting a fragile state? There is no question that this is something the Canadian government has currently bought into. The government of Canada is directing a large number of resources to South Sudan. A substantial amount of this support is being directed through external agencies such as the UN and other bilateral donors to aid South Sudan. This allows Canada to support the region by supporting the initiatives generated by other countries and agencies. It was not clearly expressed whether or not this is a response to risk-aversion. It does allow support without the risk that a specifically supported programme might
fail. A refusal to work with the South Sudanese government means that the development of the country’s capacity and the direction of its trajectory is outside of the Canadian government’s influence.

Are there effective lines of communication between the government and those who implement programming? There were several occasions where those who are attempting to work with the government stressed the ineffectual manner in which the government communicates prior to agreeing to a funding proposal. Once the agency is spending government money, there were no complaints regarding a lack of communication. One respondent noted that once they were on-the-ground implementing a programme, the government was quite forthcoming.

**Going Forward: Limitations and Future Research**

The most glaring limitation to this study was the struggle to get organizations and bureaucrats to speak openly. There appears to be an operational culture that eschews transparency, and fears repercussions for speaking “truth to power.” Obviously, the research here has generated more questions than it has answered. It identified areas of both success and need. Examining the trajectory of Bangladesh may provide useful insights to methods of supporting South Sudan as it works to enter into the realm of the industrialized nations. There are no easy answers to the questions generated through the struggles of this emerging nation. Marilee Grindle (2002, 2011) explains the need to work to develop good governance without burdening the country with unrealistic expectations. This requires long-term thinking that places good governance as an achievable state although the steps will be tentative at first. Roger Martin (2007) explains the need for all parties at the table to find a solution they can own. This does not come from either compromise or imposing the will of one party over another.

There is a massive amount of need in South Sudan and yet it is not the only place in the world where the needs are great. It was brought to light the effectiveness of Cuba’s international student
education programme. It brought children into its country to educate them while instilling a mindset that they were on a mission to improve the lot of their home country. Research into the viability of a Canadian version of this programme could provide a way to build the capacity of many struggling nations in a cost-effective environment.

The Canadian government could quite legitimately reply to this research saying that neither the researcher nor the respondents understand the position of the government and this report is not a fair assessment of the government’s attitude toward development in South Sudan. Such a statement would, in-and-of-itself, self-identify the need for a better public relations and inter-agency communication policy.

A need has been identified to develop a framework where those are charged to carry out work in a region, do not spend their planning stages bumbling around in the dark grasping at handholds that will direct them to the light. This is neither an efficient nor a cost-effective use of human and financial resources. While on a positive note some respondents had expressed an improvement in the attitude of the Canadian federal bureaucracy when working with NGOs, there is a need for a transparent framework that would allow all parties to understand the objectives and to know why a particular organization is better suited to fill the requirements of an objective. Is the charge of nepotism a valid one, when the Canadian bureaucracy is making decisions? With transparency the charge becomes invalid. While the Canadian government is an efficient machine leading a modern industrial country, when we examine the way by which it approaches development, how does it distinguish itself from the process by which decisions are made in the fragile states they are supporting? When those who are attempting to work in a region are complaining about a lack of inter-agency communication, the charge of creating short-term politically motivated goals in a system shrouded in secrecy is a hard one to challenge.
Effective communication is the key to understanding one another. While we may not like what we hear, working to understand another’s point of view is the first step in establishing a plan that is tenable to all parties. Don Snowden showed us that listening to another’s stories with a flexible frame of mind can help establish a third way of going forward. Samaritan’s Purse showed us that listening to the needs and dreams of another, and working with creative solutions can have a positive impact on a fragile population. While this training programme was the one most often cited as an excellent case study of capacity building, the respondents had to reach back 10 years to find this example. It is the researcher’s hope that this paper will someday provide a quaint vignette of the past as we move forward to developing a more effective model of working within the global community. To remain in a point of stasis would be a tragedy for the world’s most vulnerable.

Notes

1. The World Bank while funding development work has also been trying to embed NGOs with the governments they are funding, in order to monitor how their money is spent.

2. These power structures refer to the willingness of each partner to work together and the power structures involved. A complementary structure denotes working toward the same goals through different means. Cooperation suggest similar methods and goals. To coopt is to work with similar means toward different goals and confrontation implies that the partners are working with dissimilar means toward dissimilar goals.
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