

**Area Development Committees**

*Basic Guidelines*

Prepared for CARE Upper Nile  
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## **Presentation**

The objective of these guidelines is to provide a quick reference framework for staff on the field, from Project Managers to Field Assistants, of what a Area Development Committee is, what are the basic steps to form it, and how to proceed to its development over time.

The guidelines have been prepared considering the reality of staff mobility on the field, change in priorities in the area, seasonality, and program/project turnover; under the premise that none of these circumstances should impede the continuous development of the Area Development Committees to be formed by CARE.

This document has obvious limitations. First, it has been prepared in a few days, while the author was performing research and assessing the feasibility of Participatory Action Research processes in the area. Second, the whole point of this document is not to be a finalized one, but a work in progress to be complemented by CARE staff learning from the circumstances faced during implementation. In this sense, the guidelines are to be complemented with information to be provided by the staff on the Pagak Development Journals also designed by the author.

Another limitation, that might also be seen as an advantage, is that the author has prepared this document without having information of CARE's experience with the VDC concept in Uganda, a model planned to be applied in Latjor. This might be an advantage because the suggestions here included are more in line to what the researcher has seen on the field in Latjor, and any application of a model from outside needs to consider the particularities of the area.

The use and development of both the Guidelines and the Journals are crucial to generate a culture of institutional and project memory among CARE personnel, so any new staff entering in the process will be fully aware of the history of the Committees, and the particular challenges the process faces in the area.

The language used in this document is colloquial and direct, not academic. The guidelines are not a textbook, and do not replace further research and positive innovations that could be brought by current or new staff to the process.

## **The Decalogue for Forming a Area Development Committee**

1. **If you are not serious about developing the capacity of the Area, do not start a Area Development Committee (ADC).** The process is and should be irreversible. Failure of similar processes elsewhere occurred most of the times because the Committees were abandoned by the originating agent too soon, or because the training provided was not tailored to local needs. Disappointment and incredulity are possible, and will affect more than the image of the originating agent. It could affect the self-esteem of the community as a group.
2. **The ADC is not an output.** The ADC dynamic is a work methodology. Forming a ADC is only the point of departure, not the point of arrival.
3. **CARE does not own the ADC.** CARE is a proactive facilitator of its development.
4. **The ADC does not replace and does not weaken the local, county or state governments.** It improves and strengthens the relationship between local government and the population, while improving accountability and transparency.
5. **Strong leaders lead, but should not capture the decision-making process of the ADC.** Always keep an eye on those individuals with a lot of authority in the Area, making them understand that decisions taken by the ADC are to be respected even if they do not agree. Elsewhere, a way to do this has been to give high authorities and strong leaders an Advisory Role in the Committee, instead of the President or Vice-President positions.
6. **The ADC aims to be the representative of the community to local government and NGOs.** CARE should lobby with other NGOs locally and the County/State government so the ADC is recognized as a valuable and legitimate partner in development. But ultimately, it is the ADC itself which should achieve such recognition.
7. **The ADC is not a mere council to request help to an NGO.** It identifies problems but its real goal is to identify solutions. Solutions explored should be aimed to use the community resources first.
8. **Instill in the ADC members the sense that they are representing more than the current members of their association.** The representative of the youth association, for example, is representing at the ADC all the youth people of the Area, not only the interests of his/her association.
9. **Regularly check if the ADC is actually representing different and particularly vulnerable groups in the community.** Always try to identify new faces, people with ideas and with leadership potential. Use your field assistants and information provided by the ADC to this effect. Promote having regular elections of representatives. If new groups and leaders are identified, motivate the ADC to invite them to the meetings.
10. **The ADC is the engine to promote deliberation among the population.** Always promote discussion in the community beyond the ADC, with regular discussions facilitated by CARE personnel.

## **I. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **A. What is a Development Committee?**

A Development Committee is the group of representatives of a village or area gathering to assess the needs, problems, challenges and opportunities the community has, and explore together potential solutions, prioritizing those that can be achieved using the community's own resources: money, land, livestock, agricultural production, labor force, among others that can be pooled towards a common goal to benefit the community.

The Development Committee members represent the community, but **do not decide for** the community. The goal of the Development Committee is self-development, and as such, it looks to engage the whole community in the discussion of problems and solutions. Members are encouraged to bring to the meetings the ideas, aspirations, worries and solutions of the people they represent, the entire community.

Different development sub-committees can be formed in the same community, but there should be a single committee for the whole village. The sub-committees could be based on sectors or areas of action (such as Food Security, Water Management, Income Generation), geographical criteria (by groups of Bomas, cardinal points, type of land) or to address issues of particular groups of people (ethnic groups, women, youth, disabled people).

### **B. Why a Development Committee?**

South Sudan is a country in construction, with many serious and urgent problems. The current government structure still does not have the capacity nor the resources to respond to most needs of the population. In this context, Development Committees are set to use the local potential of the community as a whole to look for solutions for their own problems.

The statement above does not liberate the different levels of government from its responsibility to the people living in the village. The Committee does promote a proactive role of the community in its own development process, without waiting for action from an outsider, but not precluding collaboration with outside sources of either funding or technical assistance.

By promoting own-development, the Development Committee concepts aims to strengthen the sense of pride of the community as a whole and of individuals living in it, an environment where contributions to the community's development are recognized and promoted, and creativity and resilience encouraged.

Final but not least, the Development Committee is an exercise in local democracy, as it aims to increase effective participation by the general population, bringing opportunities

to any individual in any of the different groups represented in the Committee. Even in the case where local traditions, culture, or strong leaders tend to exclude individuals from decision-making, the introduction of the Committee represents the possibility for the lay-citizen of progressively having a say in the future of the community. This document will go more in-depth on this topic.

### **C. Who are the members of a Development Committee?**

Membership rules and processes of a Development Committee should be flexible and adaptable over-time, responding to local realities. Typically, it is not easy for an outsider to identify people with potential or similar interests to start the community. In other cases, local traditions require the established leadership to be either members of the Committee, or the ones picking the members.

However, the facilitators should aim over time to have as members of the Development Committee villagers with a sense of commitment towards the community, and able to transmit the ideas of their people. Current authorities have a role in the Development Committee, especially in the early stages, but they should in the end have an Advisory Role to the Committee.

### **D. How to select the members of a Development Committee?**

Sometimes, initial members are self-selected, people in the community interested in participating in local decision-making. When this is not the case, the initial Development Committee is usually constituted by local authorities (in an advisory role) plus leaders of opinion or heads of the major associations and groups in the community. However, members need to be conscious and constantly reminded that if they are members of the Committee, it is to represent the community, and not only the membership of their own associations.

During the subsequent sessions of the Committee, the facilitators, in this case CARE, are encouraged to proactively identify other leaders, groups or people with leadership potential to invite them as members of the committee.

A Development Committee has reached maturity once its members are selected by local and regular elections among constituencies. In other countries, typical terms of a Development Committee range between 3 and 5 years.

## **II. Typical roles within the Development Committee:**

The roles here detailed should be understood as progressive, as they represent the typical functions in a well-constituted and established Development Committee. The descriptions should be used by facilitators as a guide towards programming specific training for members of the Committee, so they are capable to comply with these responsibilities.

Another reason for not introducing all these functions from the onset is that being volunteer positions, the burden could be deemed too heavy to bear, and discourage the person from performing a leadership role.

Typically, a Development Committee has a structure with the following offices considered:

### **A. President**

The President is responsible for the overall co-ordination of VDC activities. The duties of the President include:

- Leading the VDC in identifying projects;
- Developing work plan and schedules, and supervising the projects through completion;
- Representing the VDC in discussions with local authorities and external support agencies, and maintaining good relations with representatives of these agencies;
- Acting as Chairperson of VDC monthly meetings, and call special VDC meetings whenever there is a need;
- Holding general meetings with all villagers to inform them of VDC activities and plans;
- Ensuring that resources provided by external support agencies are well managed and controlled;
- Leading the VDC in the monitoring and evaluation of its activities.

### **B. Vice-President**

The Vice-President assists the President in all of his/her duties, and fulfils the duties of President during his/her absence.

### **C. Secretary**

The Secretary serves as the "memory" of the VDC, recording all of its activities and plans. The duties of the Secretary include:

- Recording the agenda of the VDC meetings;
- Recording the subjects discussed and decisions made during the course of VDC meetings;

- Recording the ideas and counsel of development agents who assist the VDC in its activities.
- Preparing all reports required of the VDC;
- Working closely with the President to prepare VDC meetings;
- Assisting other VDC members in fulfilling their responsibilities.

In any case, the Secretary can rely on other members of the Committee that collaborate in these duties. However, he or she is responsible for these duties to be carried out successfully.

#### **D. Treasurer**

The Treasurer is the person responsible for any money raised by the VDC, and for gaining the confidence of the community to contribute to VDC activities. The duties of the Treasurer include:

- Maintaining an Accounting Journal to regularly record all funds received in support of VDC activities and all the VDC's expenses;
- Obtaining the authorization of the President and Vice-President before making any expenses;
- Carefully keeping all receipts;
- Always knowing the exact amount of money held by the VDC;
- Always being capable of providing information to others on the amount of money raised, spent and kept by the VDC, and giving reports at each VDC meeting.

#### **E. General Members**

The remaining members of the VDC are responsible for assisting in all of the above. Particularly, they are individually responsible for chairing each of the sub-committees (e.g. Water Management, Infrastructure, Rural Credit & Income-Generation, Education & Culture, Health & Sanitation, etc.) according to the consensus reached by VDC.

The sub-committees will be created by the VDC according the real situation and needs of the village. The existing programs / projects / activities within the village either generated by UN agencies and NGOs will be included in each sub-committee in accordance with their nature.

#### **F. Advisory Panel**

The Advisory Panel is formed by the local authorities and religious leaders of the community, in the case of Pagak, it is conformed by the SSRRC, the Area Administrator and any authority with a tendency to monopolize the discussion. All of them should be kept away from the positions of President and Vice-President, to avoid decision-making capture within the Committee.

### **III. Establishing Village Development Committees in the Latjor Area, with an application to Pagak Area, Maiwut County.**

NGOs and government officials in different parts of the world have formed Village Development Committees to promote local development for over thirty years. As many of those initiatives have succeeded as those that have failed. It is therefore of key importance to avoid merely copying a model from another location. The launching of Village Development Committees needs a plan of action to make it work at each specific village.

#### **A. Brief history and description of local governance in Pagak Area.**

Upper Nile State has witnessed some of the worst episodes of the long civil war between the North and the South of Sudan. Local tradition in Pagak says that it was under the baobab in what is now CARE's compound that the SPLA rebellion against the North started. South Sudan's Vice-President Riek is original from Upper Nile, and a major protagonist in local changes in governance in the area.

The population of Pagak is overwhelmingly Nuer. During the civil war, Riek led a division of the SPLA, led by John Garang, a Dinka, traditional enemies of the Nuer, creating SPLA Unity. Riek was able to initially succeed in his movement against Garang by reaching a series of agreements with the Government of the North. After gaining control of Upper Nile, he proceeded to replace local leaders with his military chiefs, creating a number of chiefdoms.

Riek was then betrayed by the Government of the North, and in successive attacks, all military chiefs and former local leaders were killed. Local systems of governance were eliminated in the process.

With the end of the war and the subsequent Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Upper Nile State became one of the two states in Southern Sudan still under Northern Sudan's administration. Khartoum appoints the State Governor, and he appoints local Commissioners, including the one for the Pagak area, the Maiwut Commissioner, who appoints the local Area Administrator. This is important to consider, since looking to the 2009 National Elections, and the 2011 Referendum, Upper Nile will be one of the key states Northern Sudan will attempt to gain.

By July 2008, local authorities are not precisely stable in Pagak. The previous Maiwut Commissioner has now an important position in Khartoum. The current Commissioner, appointed less than a year ago, has just been removed, apparently in connection with the takeover of WFP warehouse, stealing 500 metric tons of food in the process.

In the meantime, the current local authority in Pagak is an Acting Area Administrator, formerly a deputy, who took over after a disagreement between the former Administrator

and the population<sup>1</sup>. The current Area Administrator is a very young fellow, who seems very well intended, but that reflects the typical way things have been done in Pagak in latest years. For example, requesting per diem and other benefits for training participants.

The other local authority is the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC), with a local and the county representatives living in Pagak Area.

From what the author has observed in the month spent in Pagak, the SSRRC is the stronger player in the life of the community. The SSRRC assumes many roles: coordinates the development work in Pagak, demands monetary and food-for-work help from the NGOs, represents the population in demanding local jobs at NGOs, depart about local issues with Boma chiefs and are the link with the Maiwut Commissioner. No meeting of NGOs with the community can be held or initiated without their acknowledgement and permission, and lists of participants to training workshops should be shared with them in advance. Visitors must always be accompanied by an SSRRC officer in their visits to the community. The author has been requested (and the author refused giving) a monetary compensation for this more than once.

Finally, Boma chiefs have under the new administration scheme acquired a role as judges in the local court, resolving conflicts among the community, and also of the community with NGOs.

## **B. About the Nuer people traditions and organization, and how NGO work relates to it.**

Nuers have historically been semi-nomads, moving from one stream to another with their livestock. Pastoralism and food-gathering have being their means of live for generations. This tradition had a correlate in their political system. Nuers have been historically acephalous, lacking legislative, judicial, and executive organs of government. Sort of an 'ordered anarchy', where there were no kings or chiefs, only ritualistic leaders called 'leopard-chiefs'. Their society used to keep together through a process of complementary tendencies towards inclusions and exclusions that are controlled by the changing social situation, Their system is rather defined by relativity and opposition of different segments in society.

The author observed that two processes have deeply changed the Nuer social organization in the past 50 years or so: the war, and agriculture. The need to secure sources of food and water has pushed the Nuer to live in more stable and permanent communities. Pagak is a good example of this.

However, the Nuer have no tradition of collaboration between villages, or within the village. Theirs is an individualistic culture.

The Nuer have a combative view of life, with litigation a constant. Under the new government structure, they bring all their problems to the public sphere, with Boma

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<sup>1</sup> It is not clear by the time the author left Pagak who 'the population' was in this case.

leaders in charge of administering justice. Without this mechanism, most cases of dispute would require a violent reaction from the side that feels challenged.

Community traditional leaders bring balance to the community, and for this reason alone their role is highly respected. At the same time, government appointees seem to be very wary and even afraid of disappointing the community, given the remarked tendency to solve conflicts with violence and as a group. The author has heard testimonies about government officials and NGO employees fearing being lynched by the community, or of former soldiers bringing the army to solve any conflict.

### **C. Consequences for the work of NGOs in general and for the formation of Development Committees in particular**

The individualistic and combative nature of Nuer society, their respect to authority when this exists, and an entire generation and more used to survive of food aid free distribution during the time of war, represent challenges to any attempt to promote deliberation, team work and a development planning mentality in Pagak.

As valuable as the potential results of building up a village development committee in Pagak are, not doing it right might contribute to perpetuate the current structure of power in Pagak.

Local officials, particularly the SSRRC, base their legitimacy in the eyes of the population by obtaining all resources they can from the NGOs, in terms of money, jobs or food

A good example of this is what happened to the NGO ACORD in Pagak. When ACORD decided to start a Farmer Cooperative in Pagak, it had to go through the SSRRC to select the beneficiaries of the program. The SSRRC picked their winners: people with already other sources of income, friends. The program failed then to assist the poorest population in Pagak, being discontinued shortly after.

More striking is the way food-for-work programs have completely lost their meaning in the Pagak area. When the SSRRC considers that public work is needed (a decision made completely ad hoc), they course a letter to Norwegian People Aid, the NGO administering the food-for-work program locally. The SSRRC systematically inflates the amount of work needed. For example, if the road to a Boma area needs to be cleared, they state that is a 20km road when it is actually 6 km. The author has personally seen requests of 45 metric tons of food for 10 people working a few days in clearing the road. These ten people, selected by the SSRRC, will end up receiving a disproportional amount of food, if they receive any at all, which will probably be sold in local markets or Ethiopia.

SSRRC success in driving resources to people they know guarantees their high consideration in the community. The formation of Development Committees by CARE needs to consider this context. If the SSRRC, the Area Administrator or the Boma chiefs

control the process and decision-making in the Committee, there is a high risk that all the benefits of the Development Committee go to people close to the local authorities. This result cannot be allowed. CARE needs to consider alternative ways to modify membership and processes when transparency is not guaranteed. A key to achieve this is to keep the control of the meetings, particularly in early stages of the Development Committee formation. The second big step is to have a say in the selection of beneficiaries for the different projects emerging from the Development Committee discussions, by setting up basic criteria for the recipient, as extreme poverty relative to other people in the area, area of residence within Pagak, number of livestock owned.

CARE should not allow the local authorities to hand-pick the beneficiaries without discussing the reasons why they have been selected.

#### **D. Process recommended for the start-up of the Pagak Development Committee (ADC)**

In the early stages of the Development Committee, the facilitator typically lacks enough information about the community to identify people with potential to be members of the Development Committee.

The first step is then to involve the local authorities, leaders of existing associations, and representatives of key development sectors (education, health) in a series of meetings to discuss the concept of Development Committee, and its importance. They will be the **initial** members of the **Pagak Development Committee**.

##### **a. First meeting**

The objective of the first meeting is to achieve consensus from all attendees to launch the Village Development Committee. The VDC concept is introduced.

It has to be clear from the first meeting and for all participants:

- They are representing the whole community, not their particular groups, bomas or associations.
- The membership can change according to the needs of the Committee; no one will be excluded, but different people from other groups might join.
- Belonging to the village development committee is a privilege, not a job. No monetary should be expected, especially during the initial stages of the Committee.
- The Village Development Committee is a forum to voice problems and find solutions together as a group. It does not undermine the local authority, it

improves the work of the local authorities and creates an opportunity of a better dialogue between the population and authorities.

- But overall, every participant is encouraged to express his or her opinion, and everyone in the Committee should commit to listen and respect the point of view of the other members, and also from citizens not member of the Committee.

The meeting should end with a consensus to embark in the process, and the commitment of each group represented of nominating from their groups two people that will be the ones attending the meetings regularly. Every group considered in the Committee should be represented in every meeting.

## **b. Second Meeting**

After receiving the new members to the Committee, the concept of VDC is refreshed for everybody, with a focus on the potential benefits of a Development Committee:

- Identifying economic opportunities and promoting the formation of local associations.
- An exercise in democracy, allowing to discuss the ideas and concerns of the population.
- Organizing the community to be ready for concrete challenges to come, as the land issue.
- Approach the NGOs with a plan and strategy of development, avoiding piecemeal approaches to development.

It is suggested that the facilitator provides a series of successful stories of how development committees have helped to solve concrete problems of communities in other parts of the world. Here, more information from CARE's experience in Nuba Mountains and Uganda would be key to contextualize the discussion.

Next, the importance of generating information on their own as a community is highlighted. If they wait for an NGO to generate the information they need, the community will always have incorrect or not updated information, making planning difficult.

A concrete example of this would be to set up a system in each Boma to keep track of the number of livestock in the community, as a key resource. Loan and Savings groups based on cows and calves as methods of payment are not uncommon in other parts of the world to start up a business. It is a concrete possibility in Pagak, for example.

Another possibility is to set up a way to track what is being cultivated in each area or Boma, and the approximate size of plots. Groups of farmers either producing the same or producing different things can be brought together to pool resources and expand business or agree in types of production to maximize profits.

In Pagak, two group dynamics were applied on the second meeting. Group dynamics are extremely important, especially when, as is the case in Pagak, there is no tradition of collaborative work and deliberation between members of the community.

The first dynamic was a short entry survey with questions about the community. Before starting the session, and as they arrive, participants are asked to answer the questions to the best of their knowledge, but without asking each other about them. The results were striking, and reflected well the different views people in Pagak have of their community. Emphasize is done late in the session on how their different perspectives can be brought together through discussion in the Village Development Committee, so they all manage the same information towards the goal of bringing development<sup>2</sup> to Pagak.

The second dynamic reinforces this idea, while giving the participants a first glance at development mapping, this time unassisted. Participants are divided in two groups and each group asked to draw a map of Pagak identifying key milestones of the town: Administration, boreholes, school, market, etc. and to locate the limits of Pagak on the map.

Ten minutes later, and without previous alert, they are asked to exchange maps with the other group, to complete the other group's map, and make all the corrections necessary. Their different views of Pagak are compared, highlighting the differences and commonalities. Then all of them are asked to identify on the map the direction in which Pagak is growing, where the major agricultural fields are, and where new boreholes should be built.

The second meeting of any VDC is key. The participants should leave curious about what comes next.

The final issue to discuss is how the participants prefer to organize the work of the Committee. Pagak, for example, decided that due to the size of town, it would be more convenient to divide in two Sub-Committees, one grouping three Bomas, and the other two Bomas. Those members not affiliated to a Boma will work with both groups of Bomas in the concrete needs related to their sector or group and potential solution for each area.

It is important, however, to remark that while this structure is useful in terms of generating local information, Pagak does not have two Development Committees. The Pagak VDC is the union of both groups, MATCARI (Sharing ideas) and MATTETNIKEEL (One hand unity).

### **c. Third meeting**

The third meeting will set up the agenda for future work of the Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of development is used loosely here, but in following sessions the Committee should discuss what do they mean by development.

The first issue to discuss, probably dividing the members in two groups, is what do they understand as development. Is it roads? Is it money? Is it more people? The facilitator should complement this asking the groups how do they imagine Pagak in ten years (or alternatively, asking first how they imagine Pagak in ten years, then in five years).

Answers should then be compared, and the facilitator must highlight the importance of generating own-development, meaning, realizing the dream that the people of Pagak have for their town, working together.

The concept of a Development Plan is introduced as the first major output expected from the Committee. All initial training to the members will be oriented towards the design of an initial development plan.

The facilitator should guide the attendants through the major inputs of a development plan:

- Inventory of problems and challenges of the community.
- An inventory of local resources, and matching every resources and how it can be used to address each problem.
- How can those resources (every one of them, or grouping them by agricultural, natural, etc.) be used for Pagak's development, assuming that there was no NGO and no government to help.
- Inventory of all current local initiatives and NGO programs that exist in Pagak.
- Funding, emphasizing local funding
- Monitoring, evaluation, including means of verification.
- Re-planning and correcting during implementation.

Emphasize how people within the community and within their associations and groups can organize to provide timely information to correct when something is not going according to planned.

The facilitator will not be able to provide all answers that day. But will make members interested in the concept of Development Plan and eager to learn how to make it happen.

#### **IV. Process towards the consolidation of the ADC**

##### **a. Using PRA tools for problem identification**

Participatory Rural Appraisal tools and methods can be used to generate information about the community. Using PRA among Committee members will provide a first approximation to problems and potential solutions, but should be complemented with deliberation among citizens, an issue further discussed in b.

Typical PRA techniques that can be used with Committee members are: localized transects, timelines, calendars and economic flows charts.

All these tools should be used and taught as part of the process of building up an Annual Development Plan. They can be done for the whole Pagak (in the case of timelines, calendars, and flow charts) or one Boma at a time (focus groups and transects).

A key would be a demonstration of how the Committee members can use this tool with their group. For example, the facilitator can go to one Boma and direct a focus group with the participation of people living there, let's say twenty citizens from different backgrounds (youth, women, disabled, farmers, traders) and invite people to talk about their fears, problems, and motivate them to think how can they work together to ameliorate their situation, with emphasis on solutions if the NGOs were not there. Other members of the Committee would attend as observers.

The goal of this is to motivate the representatives of the visited area or group to perform these meetings regularly to listen for ideas from people in their Boma or area, as a healthy practice. Solutions will not always be found, but it is in the constant deliberation that they start to arise.

The facilitator should look for opportunities like these, where the Committee members are taken and practice development with their people, and not to limit the trainings to expositions in a classroom.

#### **b. Proactive role of ADC members**

The example above is just one way of creating incentives for ADC members to get used to regularly ask people in their group, Boma or organization 'how can we solve our problems by ourselves, even if little by little'.

Furthermore, members are encouraged to share the proceedings of the Development Committee meetings with people in their represented group.

Using the Boma as an example, the Boma representative could have a quarterly meeting with organized groups in the Boma (alternatively, plenaries for which anybody interested to discuss problems of the community is invited) to listen to their perspectives of problems in the community and to encourage proposing local solutions. This is hard to do in Pagak, where there is no culture or tradition of deliberation exists. But if it is well planned, it could have an important effect on generating new initiatives.

Members non-affiliated to a Boma, as the traders association, should be encouraged to do something similar. In the case of the trader's association, it represents 28 out of over 70 identified traders working in Pagak. The traders

representative should regularly invite all traders, members or not, to discuss common issues, problems and potential solutions, that will benefit both the association and the whole of traders in Pagak.

### **c. Proactive role of CARE**

The work with the Village Development Community is not exclusive of the Community Mobilization officer. Other sector specialist should engage in work with the Development Committee to access timely information of the needs of the community in their respective areas.

For example, the Boma representatives at the Development Committee can work together with the Livelihoods officer to promote a program of agricultural diversification in each Boma, maybe even promoting a healthy competition. Each Boma identifies people that are willing to be farmers for the first time, and the Livelihood Officer helps them in starting their own plots for the first time. Those already producing but not being able to produce enough to feed their families can also be identified in meetings as the ones described above.

Additionally, the Livelihoods Officer can benefit from information regarding resources, plot sizes and so produced locally by each Boma for the Development Committee.

Similar dynamics can be generated for Water and Sanitation, HIV/AIDS and other components CARE might have now or in future programs. In the case of Water and Sanitation, ways to organize demonstrations of latrine construction and maintenance can be given and then reproduced for the community by the Committee members.

The first users of the Development Committee have to be other CARE specialists. Their insights and use of the Committee to promote their components will also make the Committee stronger.

The other way CARE can be a proactive promoter of the Development Committee is by constantly inviting other NGOs to use the Committee to promote and develop their own programs. This would have a double effect:

- i) It will make the Committee stronger, and the sense of recognition of their work among members and the community will increase noticeably.
- ii) It will force NGOs to coordinate their efforts in specific components, hopefully increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **d. Inclusiveness**

While this is important, it will only make sense if the Development Committee gains recognition as a major player in Pagak's governance structure. And this is desirable only if the Development Committee represents all vulnerable groups in the community.

The facilitator needs to constantly push among participants the importance of inclusiveness. Pagak is a border community, growing every year to the influx of returnees that decide staying here. This means that Nuer that do not belong to local clans also stay around. Also, there is a number of non-Nuer that also return from the refugee camps and stay in the Pagak area, plus a number of Ethiopians dedicated to trade. All these groups live in Pagak, and the development plan should consider them also. Not only this, but people that have no family networks in Pagak should also be represented in the Committee.

### **B. Evaluating success and shortcomings**

A useful exercise for the facilitator is to sit down under a tree and reflect on what he or she expects of the local Development Committee. What are the goals I pursue? What objectives are consistent with those goals? When should I propose a different course of action than the one being debated or agreed?

This process is similar to have a logical framework exclusively focused on the Development Committee. Repeat a similar process with the participants, inviting them to answer. Complement their answers with yours and all of you build together a 'framework'. Guide them through connecting the dots: from goals (the dream they have of Pagak in the future) to concrete objectives, to outcomes, outputs and inputs. Teach them that this is how NGOs do it. If they understand it too, they can also propose solutions to them.

The author strongly recommends using a Participatory Action Research approach to evaluating success during implementation. This means constantly asking the Committee to self-evaluate its actions, and make the corrections necessary to improve the chances of achieving the objectives. The 'framework' is not set in stone. Specially in the early stages, sell this as a learning experience for them. Some will be most interested than others. Try to gain the attention of everyone, but without compromising the advancement of the group as a whole. Overtime, the Development Committee membership will either change and probably after a few months, will be reduced. Do not be discouraged by this. This will happen, because there will be no concrete results in the first few months. Keep going. In the end, the facilitator wants in the Committee people that are interested in making this happen. Others will come later.

## V. Recommendations

While most recommendations are included in the Decalogue featured on this document, it bears to complement those with the following:

- The Development Committee is for the community as a whole, not for the local authorities. Always promote participation among members, avoid that the authorities capture the discussion, and keep encouraging people to voice their opinion. Value their ideas. Remember that the most important positions in the VDC should not be taken by the current authorities: for them the Advisory role is reserved.
- Being a facilitator does not mean to not propose ideas. CARE might also have a development plan in mind, based on the components of the MFS. The facilitator can also present ideas and discuss them, but he or she should not accept the answer of *'If CARE wants to do it, let's do it'*. Initiatives must be discussed and ways to apply them in the best way for Pagak explored.
- The Development Committee should find a system to record information about their community in a timely manner. This system could be Boma based. Boma representatives could have block or area people responsible for receiving information about livestock, number/size of plots, crops and new problems in each block that can then be registered and transmitted to Boma representatives, and aggregated as information about the community. This exercise can be done every two or three months, or before and after rainy season, or using other important dates in the local calendar, and the results should be advertised at the Area Administration building. This will create among the people of Pagak a consciousness about changes in their community, and will inform the Development Committee, the local authorities, and the NGO community of the most pressing needs. Remember, always tell them that nobody knows this community as they do. Encourage the members to not sit down waiting for NGOs to do the job.
- While most of the initial meetings and training sessions will be in plenary, it might be needed to have separate meetings for specific training of citizens and authorities. This could better be addressed by other current training sessions given by CARE. However, informal meetings with groups of ADC members (for example, authorities and non-authorities) might be useful to encourage non-authorities to always express their point of view, to not be followers but active participants.
- Finally, a word of caution to the facilitators. This is a very hard work. Take it from the beginning as a personal challenge. Use the influence you have as an outsider and expert to open opportunities to those that have never been heard, while respecting local traditions and authorities. Respect does not mean to follow what they say. Challenge authority when necessary, respectfully but firmly. This

is a very tough job, but if you are patient and constant , you will see that the results are worth every drop of sweat.