

"Waging Peace: Building a New Life in Chad after Conflict for the Victims of Darfur," January 12, 2009

Female Speaker: From the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Marieta Harper: Good afternoon. My name is Marieta Harper. I am an Area Specialist in the African Section that generally covers countries that are French-speaking in West and Central Africa. This afternoon I have the distinct pleasure of introducing our speaker today, on waging peace in Darfur and Chad, because we're going to listen to a story of the situation of Darfur refugees in Chad.

But first I'll introduce our speaker. His name is Brian Wakley. He's a certified Engineer, MBA, and he's a Chief Executive of Cord. You'll learn a lot about Cord from our speaker. Brian Wakley has been appointed the Chief Executive since October of last year, 2008, and he was previously the International Programs Director. He's a qualified Civil Engineer. Brian is 37, holds the MBA from Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. His skills have been put to good use in his work for Cord and in his former positions with the Christian International Peace Service and Skillshare International.

He's married with four young children. Brian has traveled widely, implementing programs across Africa, India and Southeast Asia. He is a passionate advocate of working alongside local people and partners to achieve long-term peace. You can learn more about Cord and its activities by going to their Web site, which is www.cord.org.uk. And with that, and without further adieu, Brian Wakley.

Brian Wakley: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for this opportunity today to present the work of Cord and Book Wish's partnership, which is helping to wage peace in Eastern Chad with refugees from Darfur. Cord's an international organization based in England. It's 42 years old this year and started in response to the needs of women and children affected by the Vietnam War in 1967.

Since then, Cord has worked in 26 countries, ranging from Cambodia to Iraq, Afghanistan to Rwanda, and Liberia to Kosovo, working at the heart of war and violent conflict. Today, as we said, we're working in situations of conflict and post-conflict helping to build peace. Our work cuts across the entire conflict spectrum, from ongoing conflict, post-conflict and conflict prevention scenarios. We currently have programs in Chad with refugees from Darfur, in Northern Uganda with the internally displaced people and former child soldiers. In Burundi, we work helping communities to rebuild and reintegrate after 14 years of civil war. And in Cambodia, where the society's still traumatized by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, we're supporting the institutional development of civil society for a peaceful future.

Worldwide, Cord employs 700 people who will spend in the region of four and a half to five million dollars this year.

So, today's talk, I'd like to just take you on a journey of what it's like to be a refugee. What's that experience, that first experience of fleeing conflict like? And, secondly, we'll look at, why does Cord prioritize education and livelihoods when, surely, keeping people alive is so important? We'll look at how we develop effective education systems in a conflict situation and the need for top-quality books and teaching materials, which is so especially important in developing education systems in conflict situations, because there's such a lack of formal training in subject knowledge of teachers and the lack of access to external sources. And, thirdly, we're going to look at Cord's education program in Chad and use it as a bit of a case study from 2004 to 2008.

So, just pause for a moment and imagine what it's like. On the slide you can see a picture of Abdul Razique [spelled phonetically]. Just imagine yourself in Abdul's position. Abdul found himself in Darfur in 2004. He was 24 then, living in the village of Taranga [spelled phonetically] in West Darfur. It was a thriving community of just 381 houses with less than 2,000 inhabitants. Abdul was months away from completing his secondary education and hoping to get the grades to get to university to train to be a teacher. Then the Janjaweed attacked and torched the village. Abdul and 240,000 other refugees have made it to Eastern Chad since 2004, 60 percent of them are children under the age of 18.

The challenges are some of the toughest that any of us could face in our lives. They fled, they had few assets with them. Those that they did have they've traded for food in the first few weeks and months. And they now find themselves living in a camp situation, 15 to 30,000 people, depending on which camp you've gone to, a vast difference from 381 homes. Also, in Chad, they're now a Francophone country compared to the Anglophone Sudan. See how all the linguistic challenges are going across the border?

Here are just a few images from what life is like in the camp. Don't forget, you've arrived traumatized. You're rebuilding your life. There's a fear of the unknown. Are we actually safe here? When, at any point, might we be able to return? How are we going to provide for our families in this crisis?

There are other challenges, too. What about -- if you remember the Chadian community that's just seen an influx of refugees into your area and your land, if you're extremely poor, yourself, in Chad, perhaps one of the fifth poorest countries in the world, then it's very easy to be resentful as a Chadian to all the international help that's going to the Sudanese refugees. There's a real danger in much of this work that we can create other tensions and conflict going forward.

And the other problems, too, as we've seen in Chad over the last few years, the situation's worsened there. The local Chadians, themselves, have now become victims to rebels and attack and plunder on their villages. Many have been forced to live in camps, themselves. And

they can so easily resent the disproportionate help and support given to the Sudanese refugees whilst their communities go without.

One of the real focuses here, I know, for the USA government is that they focus their support particularly for internally displaced Chadians and the host communities. And as part of our peace building strategy, as well as delivering education in the camps, we've focused on delivering education to the surrounding villages and supporting their development. But, as we'll see, the situation's extremely complex in any conflict situation.

So, to Cord's role, Cord's role there is to be an agent of peace, and we work through the education and livelihood sectors. First, let's just pause. What's your definition of peace? Have you ever thought about it? Take a moment now. How would you define peace if a young child came up to you and said, "What is peace?" That's something we grapple with. Yeah, go on, throw your answer quick.

[low audio]

Absence of wars, often the first response I'm given, it's great. But, do you know, the problem with that is we actually define it by a negative term. It's the absence of something. What's the weather like today? Well, it's not raining. Yeah, okay, but it doesn't tell me what it is. And that is true, that is, unfortunately, so much of our definition of peace. And one of the places [inaudible] come from is, we've found this sort of Biblical concept that's rooted in Jewish and Biblical scriptures of Shalom.

Now, Shalom as a understanding of peace is something that conveys an image of the full goodness of God, of creative harmony, of relationships working, functioning properly between people, their creation, their creator, and includes ideas of social, economic and political prosperity. It's a really positive situation, to know it reflects dependency on each other, our interdependency, that we're not free until our brothers and sisters are free and there's a desire that everybody can reach their full potential. That's the peace that we're trying to work towards.

And that peaceful community isn't one just where NGOs and organizations like Cord are thriving. But it requires an effective public and private sector. Everybody has to work together and cooperate. And that's what we want to see in the communities that we're working with.

So, how do we get there? Generally, peace building, as I said, is complex and no one organization can do it all. And, certainly, we're very aware of that. This diagram that you can see up talks about four components that there are commonly agreed upon in order to have the peace building be effective. There's a security sector. Do you know, what's the role of the legal side, the role of the police and security sector reform? How can I be safe?

You know, that's essential for life in Chad if you're a refugee. How do you know that rebels aren't going to come back into the camp and the Chadian police force play a vital role in the [unintelligible] to protect the camps? Political framework, not just from international, and national, and Sudanese governments, but what's happening at the local level, the [inaudible]

phase in the area? You know, they can either stir trouble or they can help create that environment where people can live comfortably and develop.

Social economic foundations, yes, we need access to food, shelter, health care. But more than that, the quality of life comes [spelled phonetically] from opportunities from a livelihood. And then, finally, to going forward, because in the midst of conflict you can't really find reconciliation. But going forward in the situations we're looking at, how do we get reconciled to the injustices to the past? How do we live with these things have gone wrong and yet, somehow, find mercy that we can resolve it and we can move forward together and find healing?

Those are all the components that are required to build peace. And for Cord, our focus is really in the social and economic foundations and the political frameworks, very much at the grassroots level. We need to cooperate and work together with all others in there. And as we work together, hopefully we can see that nations are healed and that people really do find their fulfillment and reach their potential.

So what of education? Why education such an important component of this? To note, much of the international community and work that we do is focused in refugee situations on providing food and keeping people alive. And, of course, you wouldn't want to minimize that, but is that really life? And that's what we find, you know, one of the things is, in these camps, people become very despondent. There's a huge amount of dependency. We've seen that over years and years. And imagine a situation, you're fed; everything's provided for you.

One of the tensions we've seen in so many families is that, you know, the violence has come over and people are under extremely stressful situations. There's more violence in the home. And one of the problems we've seen, you know, is that the traditional breadwinners, husbands, aren't putting food on the table. That's coming from international community. They feel despondent. Tensions rise at home, the wife turns around and says, "What've you brought to the table? What's your contribution to this family? What're you doing?" And we find that just as small opportunities to develop some income to put five kilos of sugar on the table over the course of a month makes a huge difference to someone's wellbeing and their contribution.

So, that's the livelihood side. But, you know, the other side is, what are the opportunities for the future, especially for youths and young men? Why don't you go and join the militia, the rebel groups? Take revenge. You've seen extreme brutality. You know, it's difficult for any of us to find, you know, and just cause of condemnation, so you know that would be outrageous that you pick up arms and go and take your revenge. It's not in our mindset. But we know that, you know, violence is no way to solving conflicts worldwide. It's not going to work.

So, what does education offer? You know, the joy of education of discovering new things, of learning new ideas, new frameworks, new understanding, something that can bring release, a creative solution. That's what we so often need in many of these situations. And through learning, through understanding, you know, we can see a real joy of education, that knowledge that comes in to finding a different way, to finding that spark in our mind, in our history, and everything that we've learned from our experience, what can offer a way forward. That's why we

think education is so important in these camps, because it allows people to have a hope and look for new directions.

You know, I don't know about you, but a lot for me is that, my education, I really took very much for granted. That was until I went and worked out in Eastern Uganda, and I was working with a group there, the management team that we'd set up to take over the program. But five of them had only partially completed primary education. It took me three years to develop the skills that they could take over the program and run an organization effectively that helped their communities, a huge, huge amount of work.

And, yet, you know, opportunities for education can help make a huge difference. Nelson Mandela said that education's the most powerful weapon with which we can use to change the world. Kofi Annan, the former U.N. leader said education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundations rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy, and sustainable human development.

You know, education helps us to open our minds, to understand more of the world around us. Knowledge sparks that creativity, releases entrepreneurs, peace builders who see and hope for a different world, who can open up other routes and journeys, leaders who can break away from violence. So, through education we're looking to offer alternatives, give people opportunities and hope. And it's that hope that is so desperately needed in many of these situations.

So, I want to take you through, how then do you develop an education program in Chad, you know, where you've suddenly got a huge influx of refugees. You're faced with 30,000 people in each camp. It's a pretty barren land, there's tents up, and that's about it. [Inaudible] Cord initially negotiated with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and UNICEF, and agreed to take on responsibility in three camps to help set up an effective education system.

It's not like it is here or in the U.K. First thing we had to do was make an announcement for teachers. We needed in the region of 420 teachers. You know, there's no training program. They don't arrive with a nice certification. They don't apply for jobs. In fact, many of the teachers, we only found four who had any university education in the whole camp. The rest were unqualified. Some had just a few years of primary school education, but they wanted to give something back.

So, in the initial draft, we had 300 teachers. We graded each one all the way through, one to 300, and then paired off, top and bottom, and all the way down. At that point, we then get people to teach in pairs, and they go off to their schools. So you now have teaching pairs in each of the schools. And they have to rotate around the classes from P one to six, and then P seven and eight, when they're introduced so that we can make sure that each of the kids in all the classes actually get an experience with the best teachers. And we also have to continue to develop the teachers, but more of that in a moment.

There's a high demand for education. We had to introduce a shift system, morning school and afternoon school, and divide kids up because there just weren't enough teachers or resources

to run, you know, double the number of schools. So we had a morning and afternoon shift. [Unintelligible] There's no classrooms, very few buildings around. You can see here, this image is the original temporary shelters, and then behind, these are some of the new schools who are being constructed, which is a few years old now, but these schools are well under in operation.

Okay, but even the construction of schools is actually quite a political thing in Chad because -- how long are these people going to be here? If you construct wonderful new buildings, Chadians become slightly resentful. And it also, you know, it puts stakes in the ground. So nobody wants a really permanent building, they want something because there's a hope that they can return. But what we found is that the Sudanese were extremely bright and industrious people.

Children cue up to be taught in the schools. Even some, when the, you know, the school's overflowing, they don't even have the temporary shelters, they'll sit out in the intense heat just to learn. And they learn math and Arabic from one of the 450 refugee teachers. The schools are making a huge difference and there's growing demand.

Let me tell you the story of Adam Achmat [spelled phonetically] who's 15. He was brought to Gyaga two years ago by Hizam [spelled phonetically] when they fled from Darfur. Adam was alone because his aunt, his late mother's sister, is in Hajahadide [spelled phonetically], a different camp an hour and a half away by road. Nobody knows what's happened to his parents. It's all unclear. Adam's traumatized, he gets panic attacks, constant headaches and finds it hard to concentrate. But he says he goes to Langeene [spelled phonetically] Refugee School every Monday to Sunday. He's in the first grade and says, "I'm beginning to realize that an education is a good thing." Goes to school in the morning, has a break, returns home, has some food if he can, and then goes back until 12:30. He then has a rest, tries to take some food, and, perhaps, in the evening goes to the friends at the Children's Center to play some games.

Coming back to the education system, you know, how do we help make this and improve it? There's, obviously, huge demands. It's been a real challenge to be adaptive and responsive to those demands and help find innovative solutions, because, too often, there's a delay either in funding or accessing it. But people want more, and they're really pushing.

For the longer term, as well, how do we develop a system that can go back? Because one of the challenges we face, you know, how do you have a good administration system? Cord aren't going to be here forever. The Chadianese [spelled phonetically] government aren't going to run the schools. What happens when people go back to Darfur after a peace agreement is, eventually, signed? It's very unlikely the Sudanese government are going to have a strong structure they can immediately put into Darfur, and we need to think through those things now.

One of the solutions we've come up with is the development of Parent-Teachers Associations. The emphasis on this committee now is, these are your schools. You're responsible for hiring and firing of teachers. You need to make sure that children attend, that resources stay in the

schools. And one of the things we've learned over the years is that the better those committees, the better the school is.

And the idea is also that they now have those skills and responsibilities to be able to set up an education system when they go back. They can pack up the resources on the back of a donkey, take it back over the border, and have schools running in a few weeks back in their villages. That's the long-term aim because we, you know, once people's minds are open to education, the demand we've seen is ever increasing. And the side that we've got to now is that Cord really does very little without going through these committees. They take the responsibility very seriously.

So there's an image of just five of them from one of those communities.

The second side, as I alluded to earlier, is, you know, we've got teachers, a few of whom are qualified, most of whom aren't. And for those who've just done some primary education, there's a real concern for them that their students are catching up with them very, very quickly. So how do we help to develop those teachers? We run various courses that give them confidence and teaching methods.

But one of the things that has been introduced by one of our Program Managers, Ann Goddard [spelled phonetically], out there, is she worked in Sudan in Khartoum with the Swedish Free Mission. And they had a system there based from Sweden called, the Folk Bingming [spelled phonetically] -- my Swedish isn't very good, I'm afraid -- which is, basically, an interactive group of sort of peer learning, and they sit down. And the course they've run is -- here's a text, read it together, study a chapter, and then sit down and discuss what you've learned.

It was used effectively in Sweden to help literacy among the working-classes during industrialization. Ann says it was probably one of the most boring classes she's taught, but demand is enormous, and it's been extremely successful. But, again, one of the challenges is, have we got decent materials and books for them to read?

Okay, there's a group of nine men who sat there in these meetings learning and enjoying the study of new texts. And they turned around and said to Ann, you know, "We just want to continue to learn more, get to university so that we can help our communities make a difference. We'll do whatever it takes. We know we're going to have to learn a new language, and learn English, and go to an unknown culture, but this will help us give our communities a better chance at a future." We'll come back there in a moment.

[Inaudible] I want to return to Abdul Aziz, we met initially, these days he called Head Teacher in a preschool in [inaudible]. Six days a week he works from about seven until 10 in the morning with 300 preschool children, three to six, helped by four colleagues. He's got a huge heart for kids, absolutely brilliant, yet he's not just a teacher, he's also a student. And six mornings a week before he starts at 6:45, he's part of an English-language learning group. There were 400 students initially.

And they had the challenges -- they were reading any English text they could get their hands on. They had an Oxford English Dictionary that they'd uncovered from somewhere, as so often happens, but it was 50 years out of date. They were devouring any newspapers that anybody brought onto the refugee camps. And what we've seen is that, you know, people see learning English as a real road to freedom because it's taught as a second language in Sudan. It's an easier option than French for many people. And we've seen that people have really taken this on board because in Sudan, kids are taught English from the age of 10. But the committees here have said, "Nope, we want our children to learn from the age of seven."

With the help of Book Wish, we've managed to access Headway reading materials. We've had to work, and I talked about this corporation to build peace before, with the Oxford University Press and the States. They've given a very heavy discount on the books and provided teaching materials for free. We've accessed good quality Arabic-English dictionaries. And, for the evening classes, we're now looking to get solo lamps out so that people can study later.

The students, when these books arrived, were so excited. There was real joy. One of the drivers even opened one of the texts and started reading the front cover and spoke to Ann and said, you know, "What does this mean? What can I learn?" There's just that joy of having decent quality resources makes a huge difference. Our interpreter in Brejing camp, now, he is probably one of the best interpreters in the whole region, but when he saw those books, his eyes lit up.

He couldn't wait, not just to teach from them, but also to learn from them because he's a, sort of, upper intermediate level. He knows that this resource will help him become more and more fluent. As a result of having decent resources there -- we had 400 people learning languages because those resources that generated excitement, there's now 1,200 people just four months later.

The other huge difference that we're seeing, and some of these are the opportunities that come in many of the camps, is that girls can access education for the first time. In Sudan, so much of what happens, and many other African countries, is boy's education is prioritized. But in the camps where the other duties aren't necessary, is that increase in the communities are willing to send girls to classes. And we now see a 40 percent attendance rate; 40 percent of attendees at schools are girls. That's a much, much better balance. And these are some of the opportunities that help change structures, change society. And another thing that's going back in the longer term is that there'll be more women going back into Darfur than men. Men will lose their lives but women will have to rebuild their communities as they return.

Also want to talk about how education can be used as a protection, as well, for youths and not signing up to join into rebel groups. One of the big achievements of the international community over the last eight years is with the Millennium Development Goal of providing primary education. And that's made a huge, huge difference to so many people's lives. But eight years in, we're seeing people that went initially into P-1 are now completing their primary education. And we've seen it in the camps in Chad. Youths now finish their P eight Certificate and they come back and say, "Well, now what? Now what do I do? Can I get a secondary education? Can I go further?"

But there's not the international commitment to secondary education. And, you know, if we don't start providing that, youths will get frustrated. You know, there are rebel groups that mingle outside the camps that are looking to recruit. They're offering money solutions, very short-term attractive options for youths. But if we provide secondary education in the hope of developing further, even accessing university in the long term, then we can stop people being recruited. And we've seen that.

Ann wrote, she was impressed, very, very impressed. She was sitting with a group of men aged 18 to 35 who've been forced to leave their country because of the Janjaweed militia. Each one of them had lost family and friends. You could easily understand [inaudible] that these people could sit, and talk, and discuss how they could reap revenge, perhaps planning how they could join a rebel group, and go back, and attack Darfur, take back their towns and villages.

But what they were talking about after they finished their work teaching in the camps was that they go home and read books. Three times a week for three hours in the afternoon they met together to discuss what they've read, to work out the information that was unclear so that their level of education increased. They were looking to access new texts, understand new subjects, topics demand as much attention as math, science, and Arabic. And they sat down discussing the grammar rules, but also their hope for what they could become, become engineers to build better buildings in the future for their families. They could even become doctors. Their desire was to gain as much knowledge, because they saw that through education they would have a way out from the cycle of violence.

So, the next steps, really, for Cord: how do we continue to improve the quality of education, and, particularly, secondary education, to ensure that the curriculum meets the Sudanese standards, that as students progress through secondary education we will have already done work with the University of Juba [spelled phonetically] in Khartoum, that the exams are honestly invigilated, properly scored, and that they can access university later on and become the leaders that their communities need them to be? Because if we don't educate these communities now, we could lose another generation. Likewise, we want to make sure that women adults also access education. This is a huge opportunity and everybody in the community must have that chance.

Our experience shows that education's a key component of peace building. It needs investment and more than just primary education, I've said. We need to make education available for all, which is a global commitment. And, in the broadest sense of the word, we need to define what "education for all" is. This foundation of where to see communities and nations break free from the abuse of power in violent conflict, that's [unintelligible] our histories. We need to invest in education.

An interesting thing is I came into the wrong building this morning. I came through the Madison building. The quote on the side there, and I'll paraphrase a little, is for people to govern themselves, they need access to knowledge. We've seen that is so true. And it is so true if we're going to find hope for countries to govern themselves peacefully in future.

A few final thoughts: Abdul Razique and the parents were talking after school over a cup of tea one afternoon. They were talking about their fears and what they hoped for the peace building process in Darfur. One thing they agreed in Brejing camp was that education was the best thing they had. And couple of last quotes looking at how important education is: Abraham Flexner said, "Nations have recently been lead to borrow billions for war. No nations ever borrowed largely for education. Probably no nation is rich enough to pay for war and civilization. We must make our choice. We can't have both."

And Edward Everett said that, "Education's a better safeguard for liberty than any standing argument." And, finally, JFK argues that, "The progress of the American nation can be no swifter than the progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource." And I think this isn't just true for the U.S., but I think for every state and every country worldwide. Education opportunities and books are helping to provide normalcy to the childhoods lost to war and the hopeful chance at a peaceful future. That's what we're working towards in Chad. Thank you for listening.

Harper:
Brian?

Wakley:
That's my time.

Harper:
Time is of the essence at this point in time. If we have any questions, if not, then I really want us to give a round of applause for giving us insight of what it's like to bring education to refugee camps for our refugees of Darfur in Chad.

[applause]

Wakley:
Thank you.

Female Speaker:
This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress. Visit us at loc.gov.