

**Aeberhard Consulting**  
Management for Development

**presents**

# **Evaluation GURTONG.ORG**

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## 1 Executive Summary

The focus of this evaluation was to clarify whether the performance of the Gurtong website and the strategy of the overall project was responding to the needs of the Diaspora and Southern Sudanese.

The evaluation assessed the organization of the project, its networking and expertise, and whether it is able to integrate new findings and lessons learned to satisfy the formulated project objectives. The evaluation methodology was mainly comprised of qualitative interviews in Nairobi and Juba, examination of website statistics, use of an online survey, carrying of a usability study and a quantitative content analysis.

The analysis of some 10% of the news and background material on the website found that the information posted has no bias as far as topic, authors and actors and formal criteria are concerned. Gurtong.org renders the impression of a website which allows different sources to be heard on a variety of topics.

The analysis of the discussion forums shows that the project provides the infrastructure for an exchange between approximately 50 to 100 active participants, and hundreds of readers who follow the exchange of opinion passively. The forums with the general political topics are biggest in size, but measured by the quality of the exchange, the topics "Youth Visions" and "House of Nationalities" rank highest. The forums on typical humanitarian topics such as health or human rights rank lowest. From the user survey, a profile can be built up of the average visitor to the Gurtong website, discussion board:

Male, aged 21-30 years old, South Sudanese, living outside of Africa, studying at university.

However, the site is very important and highly appreciated by residents of South Sudan, older people and media and government agencies. In terms of popularity, since its launch, the Gurtong website has grown in popularity some three-fold.

The analysis concludes that visitors use the Gurtong website as they want to learn more about the political situation in South Sudan by consulting the opinions and news. They consult the website because it contains accurate information and good background material on the people and governments of South Sudan..

The people interviewed in Juba and Nairobi indicated that the Gurtong website is known and opinion leaders carefully monitor the opinion section. Interviewees mention that Gurtong provides documents that are almost inaccessible through other channels and appreciate Gurtong as an reliable source for background material. However, they consider that information is not updated regularly. Therefore, users would appreciate email update alerts.

Gurtong is an online media, structured like any modern print media to accommodate the requirements of the various users. It serves users in the Diaspora as well opinion and policy makers in South Sudan. Gurtong website is an influential media that has achieved the main objectives set. Nevertheless, Gurtong could increase its influence by addressing more directly people in South Sudan and foster debates in the country. Gurtong could strengthen its outreach, promote its product in South Sudan through existing media channels, and adjust its management to achieve such new undertakings.

## 2 Introduction

The Gurtong Peace Project seeks to establish a Southern Sudanese Diaspora coalition. This coalition will be based on mutual respect with a view to promoting peace and stability among Southern Sudanese abroad as well as within Southern Sudan. The project aims to bridge the gap between different cultures to allow the Sudanese Diaspora to make a noteworthy contribution in the search for unity and peace.

A major objective of the Gurtong Peace Project is to gather knowledge about the people living in Southern Sudan and show respect for their cultural identity. To achieve this, a constantly improved web site was created, with weekly news update, an opinion board, a discussion forum, accurate background documents and practical information. The site has gained attraction with a current average of 50'000 visits per month. Today, the second generation of management run the initiative successfully as a registered trust under Kenyan law.

The specific objectives of the website are to provide non-partisan information about cultural, social, political, legal and administrative issues in Southern Sudan and to offer Southern Sudanese Diaspora around the world a means to communicate with each another in a constructive way with a view towards strengthening their reconciliation efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The Swiss Foreign Ministry's Department for Human Security funds the initiative and is evaluating the Gurtong Peace Trust externally for the first time. The evaluation shall contribute to the planning and decision making for the coming project phase conducted by an Advisory Assembly foreseen 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 in Nairobi.

The focus of the evaluation is to clarify whether the performance of the site and the strategy of the project responds to the needs of the Diaspora and the Southern Sudanese. An evaluation team was established including a professional with experience in Sudan and Media Project Management, a media analyst and an expert in website evaluation (for details see chapter 9).

## 3 Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation assessed the organization of the project, its networking and expertise, and whether it is able to integrate new findings and lessons learned to satisfy the formulated project objectives. A qualitative review and quantitative studies shall contribute to the overall key question:

Does the project create a useful network, contributing to the reconciliation of the members of the Southern Sudanese Diaspora and engaging them in the reconstruction of a peaceful Southern Sudan?

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Tender Document for the Evaluation of Gurtong, September 2006

This question is structured as follows:

- Is the website non-partisan?
- Does the website provide reliable and useful information?
- Who is using the discussion Forum and what topics are being raised?
- Are any regulations being applied to control content?
- Can individuals contribute freely and do they contribute in a constructive way?
- Is the website user-friendly?
- Does the website attract younger generations?
- Is the website reaching target groups?

The evaluation focused on factual evidence from the quantitative analysis of the survey, the site statistics and content analysis. These different sources produced information that was then compared for qualitative findings.

## 4 Constraints and Accuracy

The evaluation is organised by a team of three, working on the different topics from content analysis, qualitative interviews in Nairobi and Juba to website statistics. This research was conducted in parallel during a period of two weeks to be able to benefit from the team members presence and adhering to the deadline specified by the client. Due to time limitations, the evaluation team had to choose standard methodology procedures for content analysis and site performance. In addition, the evaluation team had to focus on a limited number of key documents, actors and performance elements. The team could only consider prompt responses of the online survey and email questions and interviews were limited to persons available during the short field visit.

Nevertheless, the evaluation team gathered reliable information from over 30 interviewees in Juba and Nairobi and benefited from a very satisfactory return rate for the survey (141). In addition, site statistics and documents analysed have shown sufficient evidence to allow the team to summarise findings and formulate conclusions based on an accurate understanding of the project.

## 5 Evaluation approach

The focus of the evaluation was to analyse the performance site and the strategy of the project in its overall goal of engaging Sudanese within the country and the Diaspora in the reconstruction of a peaceful Southern Sudan.

### 5.1 Evaluation Methodology

The **qualitative interviews in Nairobi and Juba** encouraged users to provide their opinion about the quality of material on the site, the quality of discussions and the value of Gurtong contributions, as well as Gurtong's characteristics and shortcomings.

How interview partners use Gurtong and their other channels to get information about Southern Sudan or how they discuss political issues and interlink with the Diaspora was of particular interest. The evaluator analyzed how effectively Gurtong could facilitate and interact with individuals and institutions.

Reviewing documents, conducting interviews with project supervisor, project director and project staff allowed proper assessment of the project organization, its networking and expertise, its editorial policy and whether it is able to integrate new findings and lessons learned.

The satisfaction among discussion-group members and users, their potential interaction and their use of the site are analyzed through **website statistics** and an **online survey** for registered members and visitors. The evaluators had a special interest in analyzing the real use of the site and its various parts, as well as user's profile and needs.

Furthermore, the web site and discussion forum's **technical performance** was analyzed. Attention was given on user-friendliness and attractiveness of the website and the evaluator explored how the website is used, updated, and what maintenance measures are applied. This analysis is based on a checklist utilised in professional website evaluations. It includes software elements, access, speed, as well as more qualitative oriented elements like visual approach, structure and appearance of the site.

Findings of a **quantitative content analysis** was to determine whether Gurtong.org implements the editorial policy and non-biased, non-partisan approach as stated in the project objectives.

The evaluators analyzed the quality, selection and priority of news and background material, structure of topics and authors /sources utilized by Gurtong editors. The evaluators analyzed major discussion boards, postings, issues and quality of the discussion.

### 5.2 Evaluation focus: Thematic clusters of interest on the site

According to the evaluation, the site can be structured into 5 main clusters or sections. Each section has a specific approach:

**News:** The editor compiles news and weekly updates based on Internet searches. He/she receives additional contributions or verification by in-country and volunteering international

correspondents. News provides an update on issues of public interest that relate to South Sudan.

**Opinions:** Various authors send their contributions to the editor or their papers are found by the editor elsewhere. The editor carefully selects, sometimes edits, and posts such contributions directly. A set of "streamline" and opposition opinions should promote debate based on Gurtong's non-partiality.

**Background Material and Documentation:** Key documents and background material are elaborated by various actors and carefully verified by the Gurtong editor prior to posting. Information focuses on peace and governance, culture (ethnic variety) and geography (maps).

**Practical information** is prepared by Gurtong editors to enable Diaspora to understand the situation in South Sudan (Jobs, Business,..)

**Discussion Board:** The Discussion Forum on gurtong.org constitutes an important section in itself. It is highly interactive and, therefore, different from the rest of gurtong.org. It can be accessed without having to be registered or signed in. However, to add a reply or a post, registration is required, without having to reveal one's identity. Registered members post contributions directly. This Forum invites participants to provide contributions and reflections in a respectful manner. Gurtong's editor intervene as moderator to ease potential tension and to stimulate constructive debates.

## 6 Results of the evaluation

To understand the evaluation in all its details, two annexed reports on "website contents" by Guido Keel and on "website performance and statistics" by Glenn O'Neil are an integrated part of this evaluation and merit detailed reading.

### 6.1 Systematic Quality Analysis of the Gurtong Site Content

#### 6.1.1 News, Opinions and Background Material

In this part of the evaluation, the content of gurtong.org will be analyzed. Due to the volume of information published, sections of highest interest were selected. The sections chosen for content analysis were the documents section, the opinions section and, to a lesser degree, the news section. In these parts, a random sample of 62 documents was taken. Furthermore, the discussion forum was analyzed quantitatively and, on an explorative level, also qualitatively.

The underlying question for both the information platform and the discussion forum is: Is Gurtong implementing its non-biased and non-partisan policy; and does Gurtong provide its users with balanced, non-biased and non-partisan information?

#### **Author, Source and Topic**

The analysis shows that there is transparency concerning the origin of information. Only 3% of all researched cases revealed a lack of a source or author. However, in 50% of all cases – only in the "opinions" section, an author's name was provided. It is not clear if all

readers are familiar with these names. For the rest of the documents, there is no focus on any sort of information provider. Gurtong.org seems to take its documents from a large variety of sources.

The analysis showed that a vast majority of documents posted concerned South Sudan or Sudan in general. Less than 5% of all documents were on Darfur, on neighboring countries, or on Africa. There were no documents about issues outside Africa.

The analysis by main topic shows that content on the political process, tribal issues and governance enjoy highest priority. Information about the country's economy, its infrastructure or the living conditions in South Sudan are not nearly as important.

Furthermore, war and violence is hardly ever the main topic of a document. While it naturally appears as a secondary topic in quite a few documents, it was only of main importance in one analyzed document.

### **Actors**

About one third of all documents had the Sudanese president and/or his government as the main actor. This is of little surprise, considering that the main content of the documents concerns political matters. However, it is positive to note that already the second most important group of actors in the documents are ordinary Sudanese people or the people of (South) Sudan as a nation.

Relatively little weight is given to the oppositional groups. This could be an indicator for some political bias in the sample: The documents mostly talk about the people in power, and very little about the opposition.

The Diaspora appears to be neglected in the documents. This shows that while gurtong.org is aimed at Sudanese in Diaspora, it is not about them.

### **Editing process**

In order to provide fair and balanced information, it could be expected that Gurtong staff would edit some documents to put them in context, to explain its background. However, more than 90 percent of all documents showed no signs of editing. They were copied onto gurtong.org the way the author or source had written them.

A random review of the documents showed, however, that while there is disagreement between the authors of different documents, the content of almost all articles is quite factual and respectful, without aggression or slander against people with an opposing view.

No bias with respect to formal criteria was found. It seems that whatever the various groups of authors choose to publish on gurtong.org will be published, with no limitations or preferable treatment to any group.

However, there is a bias in length between the document section of the site and the Opinions section: With an average of almost 8000 characters per documents, opinions tend to be longer than the other documents.

## Conclusion

After an analysis of a sample of almost 10 percent of all documents posted in the News, Opinion and Documents section of gurtong.org, we may conclude that the information posted has no bias as far as topic, authors and actors and formal criteria are concerned. Gurtong.org gives the impression of being a web site, which provides access to different sources about a variety of topics.

### 6.1.2 Gurtong Discussion Forum (GDB)

The objective of the GDB is "to serve as a platform for all South Sudanese who want to participate in the quest for peace, unity and stability, both at home and in the Diaspora. It has been and still is our intension and hope that this website accommodates our differing ethnic backgrounds, social and political aspirations" (GDB, Terms of Use).

The success of the GDB thus relies on many people exchanging their thoughts and ideas in a civilized manner to create a higher level of understanding among each other. It can, be assumed that the greater the variety of people posting different topics, the higher the attractiveness for people to use the board, either passively by just looking at the entries, or actively by replying to entries.

#### Forum popularity

There were 1229 people registered with gurtong.org (November 23, 2006)<sup>2</sup>. However, of these, only 356 have ever posted a contribution on the GDB. Only a small group of people is actively contributing to the board: The 25 most active contributors (2% of all registered GDB participants) are responsible for roughly 50% of the GDB entries. The 80 most active contributors (6.5%) are responsible for 80% of all entries.

The forum's membership peaked in August and September 2005 with 88 and 57 new members registering respectively (compared to an average monthly registration of 29). It is unclear whether this peak is related with the re-registration process.

The number of posts on the forums is also an indication of the popularity of the website, although we have to take into consideration that the number of posts should not be viewed in isolation. In this regard, the average number of posts was 566 per month with peaks in March and April 2005 with 1793 and 1653 posts respectively.

#### Participants outline

When registering for GDB, each member is asked about place of residence and nationality. However, only very few people registering bother to answer the question. Of the 356 active people, only 19 filled in their place of residents, and only 167 shared information on their nationality, showing 162 being of Sudanese nationality.

No further information could be retrieved from the website directly. The evaluation team has sent a survey to all registered members to obtain further information. For more information see chapter 6.2.1..

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<sup>2</sup> The GDB statistics say that the number of participants is 752 (Nov. 26, 2006). It is not clear how the GDB comes up with this number.

## Forum outline

As per end of November 2006, there were nine active forums, six closed forums, and four administrative forums. The evaluation considered nine active forums only, since access to the closed forums was denied to the researcher.

Each forum has a thematic title and consists of between 13 and 559 original entries (posting) on an aspect of the title topic added by any registered participant.

The 9 active forums contain 18'897 posts, which is 77.8% of all postings ever posted on GDB (closed forums: 21.8%, administrative forums: 0.4%). The total number of views for all active forums is 530'217. This shows that many more follow the discourse passively and read.

A quantitative analysis of the nine active forums shows vast differences in activity. The three most intensively used forums deal with politics and the peace process. Analysis of replies per posting indicates which forums are used most intensively, meaning which entries are replied to the most. In this comparison, the two forums on Youth Visions and House of Nationalities score best. They also have the highest views per posting, which indicates high passive use.

## Interactive, lively forums

The forum titled "Youth Vision for Southern Sudan" has many different posters from different people. It is interesting to see that people with few postings receive the highest number of replies. Postings showing personal aspects, emotion and strong opinion have a high number of replies in this forum. Postings, which are purely fact-based, on the other hand, don't generate much response.

The forum "House of Nationalities" shows an active exchange. Postings, with clear standpoints or strong opinions, provoke intense discussion. Another factor, which triggers discussion, is entries about the cultural heritage of South Sudan.

## Quiet forums with little participation

The forum on "Health Matters" shows that pure fact-based postings attract no interest. If the facts also deal with a topic from one view, it catches little attention.

In Health Matters, the moderator and one participant contribute 11 of 13 postings, meaning that they are running the forum almost by themselves.

In the forum on "Human Rights Issues", 23 of 27 postings are by the moderator and one participant. This forum shows that attention to a specific posting does not depend on its length, as might be assumed. A brief posting may be more attractive, but this forum shows that this alone does not provoke participant reaction.

## Role of Moderator

The moderator plays an important role in the strategic outline and the daily handling of the GDB. The evaluation team, therefore, analysed the actions of the Gurtong moderator in the GDB. The moderator intervenes on two levels:

- Trigger discussions by posting new topics and ideas: The analysis shows that the more a forum relies on a single person, usually the moderator, to create new postings, the less interaction there is. As seen in the examples of successful and unsuccessful forums above, >Jakol< is often responsible for many postings within a forum, but he usually does not start the postings with the highest interaction.
- Monitor ongoing discussions to prevent them from getting out of hand: The moderator intervenes very little. In at least one case, participants asked the moderator to stop a discussion because it was getting ugly. However, the moderator only stepped in a while later, and he left the insults on the page, despite their violation of the Terms of Use of GDB (no entries "with foul language"). If the moderator steps in, it is usually in gentle, calming tone (for details see annex). Members and visitors might be discouraged to visit the GDB if the debates deteriorate. Statistics and the field assessment have provided some proof of this. However, lack of specific data prevents us from formulating a definitive conclusion on the matter.

## Conclusion: GDB quality depends on balancing Emotions and Facts

Forums about "general political" are the largest. However, when measured according to quality of the exchange, "Youth Visions" and "House of Nationalities" rank highest. The forums about humanitarian topics such as health or human rights rank lowest.

Forums with opinionated, personalized and/or controversial content generate the greatest response. Opinions generate more entries, and insults can provoke a lively exchange. This indicates that a high number of replies does not always stand for quality of discourse. Entries, which are purely fact-based, receive modest feedback and are read least. Furthermore, forums with contributions by a variety of participants also generate more replies than forums with only one or two major contributors.

It can be a thin line between a lively discussion and an insulting exchange. It is the delicate job of the forum manager to draw the line between the two. While the moderator takes on a very important role in supervising the discussion, as there is always potential for personal insult and aggression, he or she cannot set the discussions, at least not single-handedly.

(For a detailed analysis and statistics, consult the attached annex Report on Website Content Analysis by Guido Keel)

## Users Behavior (Findings from Survey and Site Statistics)

The analysis has shown that the GDB provides the infrastructure for an exchange between approximately 50 to 100 active participants, and hundreds of readers follow the exchange of opinion passively. From the data provided on the web, it cannot clearly be said where the people who participate are located. The survey sent to registered members and posted on the homepage allows more in-depth on Gurtong users, with 141 responses the survey gives a representative sample of the Diaspora using the Discussion board.

Furthermore, careful analysis of site statistics allows analysing general interest in the site.

### 6.1.3 Profile of Website Visitors

Based on the demographic question of the user survey, a profile can be built up of the average visitor to the Gurtong website (main focus Discussion Board):

*Male, aged 21-30 years old, South Sudanese, living outside of Africa, studying at university.*

Respondents also indicated from where they access the website with most respondents accessing it from home (36%), school/university/college (29%) and work (20%). The website is visited daily by 66.6% of survey respondents and at least weekly by another 24.6%. The demographic information indicates a majority of respondents from the Diaspora living outside of Africa (74%).

However, a further analysis of the importance and satisfaction variables indicates that the site is very important and highly appreciated by the following groups (more so than by the Diaspora) even if they are underrepresented in the survey<sup>3</sup>:

- Residents of South Sudan
- Older people, particularly those in the 51-60 years old age bracket
- Media and government agencies.

These findings were confirmed during the field visits (see chapter 6.4.)

Since its launch, the Gurtong website has grown in popularity some three-fold:

The number of visitor sessions<sup>4</sup> on the website has increased from 17,000 in December 2004 to 54,000 in October 2006. This indicates an average of 1,371 visits per day to the website, hence an acceptable number. (Based on available data, "competitive" websites range from 150 visitors (southsudan.net) to 3,500 visitors (sudantribune.com) per day.

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<sup>3</sup> As supported by the interviews undertaken in South Sudan, the website is important for residents and government agencies there – but they are not able to access the website as frequently as the Diaspora living abroad (and thus a partial explanation for why they are underrepresented in the survey).

<sup>4</sup> A session is defined as: the session of activity that a user with a unique IP address spends on a website during a specified period of time. Definition from:

[http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/U/user\\_session.html](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/U/user_session.html)

The Gurtong website has had some "peaks" in its activities:

- Forum posts peaked in March and April 2005 (John Garang's speech in Brussels on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement CPA)
- Forum membership peaked in August / September 2005 (Special Feature covering the death of Dr. John Garang as well as the swearing in of Lt Gen. Salva Kir)
- Website visits peaked in April to July 2006 (no report available at date).

The average length of a visit to the Gurtong website was 7.46 minutes with 3.47 pages viewed. Visitors are spending considerably more time on the Gurtong website than on average website: Based on global web statistics, the average length of a visit to 3.47 web pages would be 1.5 minutes<sup>5</sup>.

#### 6.1.4 Preferences of Site Visitors

Based on the data provided by website statistics and user survey, the following conclusion could be reached about the preferences and needs of visitors:

*Visitors use the Gurtong website as they want to learn more about the political situation in South Sudan by consulting the opinions and news. They consult the website because it contains accurate information and good background material on the people and governments of South Sudan.*

"News updates" and "Opinions" are the most popular pages of the site according to both the website statistics and the user survey. The user survey indicates that the "Governments", "Links" and "Discussion Forum" pages are frequently visited whereas the website statistics indicates the "The Peoples (Tribe Profiles)" and "Job opportunities" and "Links" are frequently visited<sup>6</sup>. According to the user survey, the least visited sections are "Travel" and "Business".

Ranking	Website Statistics	User Survey
1	News update	News update
2	Opinions	Opinions
3	The peoples - Tribe profile	Governments
4	Job Opportunities	Discussion Forums
5	Information Links	Information Links
6	States profiles	Political Parties
7	Documents	Documents
8	Counties profiles	Parliaments

*Graph: Most Popular Site Content – Comparison of Data*

<sup>5</sup> Nielsen Net Rating Global Index: [http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/resources.jsp?section=pr\\_netv&nav=1](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/resources.jsp?section=pr_netv&nav=1)

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the website statistics do not include a comparative measure of visits to the discussion forums as technically it is a separate website.

The user survey also requested of the participants the reason why they visited the site. "To learn more about the political situation in South Sudan rated highest and "Read the news updates and opinions". The user survey also showed that visitors liked the site for primarily for its "Accurate information" and "Good background material". Some half of survey participants indicated that both these factors are important.

(For a detailed analysis and graphics consult the attached annex Report on Website statistics by Glenn O'Neil)

## 6.2 Information Research and Dissemination

### 6.2.1 Gurtong' s Editorial Policy and Users Judgment

Gurtong has established several sections where information can be posted to accomplish a un-bias and accurate editorial policy.

#### **News**

According to Jacob Akol, the key selection criteria are based on what fulfills Gurtong's objective best. Information is selected with a large amount of experience on what serves public interest and how to fill the information gap, with various opinions, while keeping, a "neutral" attitude, a reputation of having no political agenda.

Users' Judgment: Interviewees do not consult the site for latest news, but study the editor's selection of news and opinions, considering that the well-known Gurtong editor is capturing things of general importance. Journalists benefit from compiled news, opinions and background information and consider it most reliable. However, crosschecking is necessary. They consider Gurtong's posted information as being of public interest, of broad origin and from valuable sources; therefore of interest for their own work. Qualified journalists like Alfred Taban (Khartoum Monitor) consider Gurtong stories being well written, unlike other web sources. The editorial line and quality of Gurtong was highly appreciated by most interviewees.

#### **Opinions**

To engage the readers into a more interesting debate, an opinion section has been created. It allows the editor to post controversial opinions, even articles of northern academic or politicians contributing to the debate on unity and towards reconciliation.

However, most opinions sent to Gurtong do favor separation and, therefore, this opinion has a strong presence on the site. The editor regards it as a key task to challenge this opinion and to place a greater variety of opinions.

Users' Judgment: Gurtong is known and opinion leaders carefully monitor the opinion section. High respect and recognition of the Gurtong editor allows and permits such interest within and outside the country.

## Discussion board

The discussion forum has grown steadily over time with a setback during 2005. The editing policy has been adapted to carefully study and validate contributions. Users require internal registration.

The editor appreciates his influence for guiding constructive discussions – and if necessary even close or deny debates and contributions. He regrets that his own opinion is strongly accepted by users, and hardly ever challenged. The editor decided therefore to coach rather than to contribute with content. He is backed by a group of advisors, that are part of the Gurtong setup.

Users' Judgment: During the field mission, only one person challenged the editorial policy of Gurtong being too liberal. The person abandoned Gurtong, as he felt offended by the different opinions, he expected the site being more streamlined towards "Dinka" policy. Interviewees, especially journalists also consider Gurtong's discussion Forum being relevant for them. Diaspora Group's information is generally based on rumors, journalists argue. Journalists appreciate that Gurtong's editor is able to identify such rumors, contribute with information and transform the debate into constructive dialogue.

## Background material, documents

Gurtong invest heavily in lists on ethnic groups, culture and government institutions. There are several documents that are difficult to receive locally even for policy makers and pressure groups. Many documents on culture and ethnic information, maps etc. are only available on Gurtong.

However, the update of such documents requires again high input and according to the team it is very difficult to get valid update information. Gurtong invests in correct spelling of names and locations, as many statements and documents originate from Khartoum and are written in Arab and later translated into English with wrong spelling. By introducing local focal points and correspondents, Gurtong is able to verify the quality of such documents and can guarantee its accuracy. Gurtong invests a lot to access such documents and to verify its information it has built confident relations to key ministries and the office of the presidency, where it has access at a very early stage to press releases and key documents of and for public interest.

Users' Judgment: Interviewees mention that Gurtong provides documents that are almost inaccessible through other channels and they recall anecdotal evidence of situations, where the download and viewing of Gurtong's documents did ease communication and allowed a broader local participation in conflict management (e.g. Kokora, land tenure Juba, draft constitution, law documents).

Journalists appreciate spelling accuracy for places and names, but they consider that information is not updated regularly.

Institutions have identified Gurtong as an option for document dissemination. They benefit from the dissemination through the site and post documents (e.g. the Neuchâtel Seminary, the House of Nationalities, maps, etc.) that would have less attention otherwise.

### 6.2.2 Diaspora Core Groups

During the initial phase Gurtong particularly organized events abroad (e.g. Berlin Meeting, NS Watch Seminars) and it promoted core groups within Diaspora communities. Gurtong promoted in UK, Germany, and Eastern Africa by fostering special Diaspora events and by special reporting on key events (e.g. Inauguration Garang, Rumbek).

This proactive approach enabled Gurtong to attract and increase audience continuously and to establish a permanent and solid interest abroad.

Meanwhile, the Diaspora communities are valuable providers of information and do participate in information sharing through a network of volunteering "correspondents" among Diaspora Groups in New Zealand, Australia, US, Canada. These "correspondents" are committed to send information from Diaspora Group events and undertakings in their respective host country. In Europe, correspondents in Norway and the UK do report on a non-regular basis. Furthermore, Gurtong additionally benefits from Diaspora members that browse the web for interesting news and ideas and send it to the editor for consideration and placement on the site. Their monitoring and contributions allow Gurtong to be accurate and updated, with rather low investments.

### 6.2.3 Correspondents

Gurtong editing team is highly aware that their documents are not updated regularly and put strong efforts during recent months. A key difficulty for the editing team is to get valid update information from within the country. Gurtong recently hired again staff in Karthum and Juba, whereas Malakal and Wau are pending.

Until now, the strategy to gather information through a network of local correspondents was not very successful, during 2006 qualified journalists have become a rare and expensive "commodity" and prices rise on the day alongside with an observed degradation of work ethics.

The high demand on news and the scare availability of good journalism created within short time an overheated and expensive situation for all media. Pressure on the market will rise continuously. During the evaluator's stay in Juba, Khartoum Monitor and Sudan Tribune's publishers and chief editors were in town to establish offices and to hire regional correspondents. Also Nairobi based agencies try to hire local staff (e.g. Reuters). The demand for news from Juba, Darfur, from peace talks with the LRA and other issues are on the rise.

### 6.2.4 AMDISS Media Center

During 2005, a high rate of return was expected after the signature of the peace agreement. Gurtong considered the establishment of regional information centers that provide accurate and practical information on "home" territory. The idea is not abandoned but has less priority in today's activities than in the written proposal. Interviewees did not consider such undertaking being a priority.

The director of Gurtong, Jacob Akol, promotes through his personal initiative and intensive work as chairmen of AMDISS, the right for free expression in South Sudan. This is highly relevant in a context where sheer oppression against all form of free expression was common and today media do operate in a space of lawlessness, uncertainty and experiencing security risks. (The day before our arrival, Juba Post Editing Team was

threatened and detained by a militia group of 12, based on unproved and even false accusation.)

Gurtong facilitated the work of Jacob and the initiative today is high on the agenda of the Ministry and the GOSS Parliament. The proposed bills are about to pass legislation. This will enable a framework to establish a progressive and advanced approach to Media and article 19. Furthermore, AMDISS has gathered a series of interested organizations to establish a media center in Juba that supports media and journalists. New initiatives easily may grow out of such an undertaking.

### **6.3 Users Interest and Preferences (Field Study)**

The people interviewed in Juba and Nairobi can be clustered into the following user groups:

1. Journalists and media personnel
2. GOSS Ministries and Government staff
3. International Agencies

The results of the interviews correspond highly with the findings of the web statistics and allow in-depth study.

#### **6.3.1 Journalists and media personnel**

Journalists of all media institutions recognize and appreciate Gurtong as a source of information, opinions and relevant key documentations. Journalists appreciate the high quality and standard of the documents, consult the "news update" to monitor their own news selection and they do search "opinions" (and less frequent) the "discussion board". This is important as Sudanese print media take up to 50% of their news and products from sources in the Internet, according to their chief editors.

Journalists do refer to the high amount of animosity within the society, sometime simply based on illiteracy and misuse or poor language used. Information in Sudan is not adequate and therefore Diaspora might be misinformed, hence Gurtong's editorial policy with factual news and accuracy is highly appreciated. Gurtong being an Internet media makes it valuable for improving their production.

Gurtong.org stimulates journalists to reflect on different opinions, to reflect on their own production and on their own reporting. Print media journalists study carefully critical inputs and appreciate that Gurtong offers a high standard on writing, thoughts, authors and debate inputs.

Journalists appreciate the efforts of AMDISS. Gurtong maintains close relations with journalists and all participate with interest in the establishment of the new media law and center (through AMDISS). Hence, relations are based on friendship and mutual interest.

Radio stations in Juba do not interlink with Gurtong.

Nairobi based IRIN and Sudan Radio Service use the site to search key documents related to their radio productions (e.g. documents on juvenile justice for the lost boy production, reference documents on CPA). They pick elements of interest or consult the site for background information, focusing on particular pages related to ethnical or cultural information.

### 6.3.2 GOSS Ministries, Government staff

Many of GOSS Administration staff moved to Juba in the last months. Most of these people learned about Gurtong while outside Sudan. High-ranking staff in the GOSS administration do consult Gurtong. They know Gurtong as a source of information and debate. They continuously observed the improvements of the site but consult it less frequently now, as access is yet low and difficult.

They do want to know what people in the Diaspora, streamline and opposition authors think, knowing the arguments of appreciation or criticism. They consider Gurtong being the sole site that allows such consultations, having a quality standard and contributions from reputable authors and editors.

They observe the discussion board without posting their own contributions, and more specifically consult the "opinion" and "news" sections to monitor the situation.

The evaluator spent additional time with these people, as Mr Akol, in his function as chairman of AMDISS, did promote the launch of the media center and especially the promotion of new media legislation. The Minister of Information and the Minister of Regional Relations as well as high-ranking staff was surprisingly favorable for such a liberal legislation. The preparation of the bills done by Mr. Akol was highly appreciated and a deep sense of confidence has been observed.

GOSS staff in the press office of the Presidency starts to realize the usefulness of Gurtong to address the Diaspora. High-ranking sources understand that Gurtong fills an information gap for the Diaspora. It was mentioned that the "secret service" was heating the debate by nature and that Gurtong can contribute to more balanced information. Gurtong offers a unique platform, for a long period NGOs, SPLM and others kept debates behind closed doors or were not sufficiently trained to communicate adequately.

### 6.3.3 International Agencies (Nairobi and Juba)

International organizations with humanitarian mandate based in Nairobi have easy and permanent access to internet info services. To satisfy their information needs on South Sudan, they choose among many internet based news sources<sup>7</sup>.

Gurtong is not priority for this user group and they visit the site rarely. They are not convinced that the site is un-bias. However, they recognize the site as a source for downloading peace documentations and maps.

International organizations with humanitarian mandate based in Juba have slow but permanent access to Internet and depend either on newsletters or quick consultations on the internet. They do appreciate the compiled weekly news updates; consider it being well edited and accurate. They do consult Gurtong for pages with regional, ethnical information and the pages with practical data. These organizations do not have interest in long documents nor do they search the site for updates. If documents are not accurate, they will not return for a later updated version, as access is too slow. They prefer email services rather than the Internet.

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<sup>7</sup> Organizations use [www.sudan.net](http://www.sudan.net), [www.sudantribune.org](http://www.sudantribune.org), the international crisis group [www.icg.org](http://www.icg.org), email newsletters (preferably John Francis Deng's UNICEF updates) and specific "internal" newsletters within their networks and meetings (e.g. SudanFocalPoint Maillist).

### 6.3.4 Users Alternatives to Gurtong Website

The survey and interviews showed what other media on South Sudan are consulted. In general, the top five alternative sources of media were found to be:

Sudan Tribune, BBC, Sudan.net, Sudan Radio Service, Sudan Mirror.

In the survey a separate question was asked concerning the use of discussion forums and websites on South Sudan. The top five alternative forums and websites consulted were found to be: Sudan Tribune (website), Sudan.net, Southsudan.net, SPLM-Diaspora and Madingaweil.com.

These sites can be regarded main competitors for Gurtong' s objective to disseminate information. It is interesting to see that there are print media, websites as well as radio mentioned.

## 6.4 Website Management and Site accessibility

### 6.4.1 Accessibility

For accessibility, we refer to the ease of using the Gurtong website. The key points on accessibility are as follows based on the user survey and the analysis of the undersigned:

**Downloading speed:** this does not appear to be an issue for most survey respondents. However, we have to take into consideration that the majority of respondents live outside of Africa. Tests made on 56K modem line indicate that the site loads relatively quickly, slightly quicker than "competing" sites, such as southsudan.net and sudantribune.com. admittedly downloading speed is difficult to asses as it depends on many factors linked to the user's location<sup>8</sup>.

**Search capabilities:** the search engine was a function that received a low rating from respondents of the user survey. Notably when entering a term into the search engine it opens a new window without results but with a new search field where the term must be entered again. This could be potentially confusing for visitors.

**Design:** the general look and feel of the corporate design is applied throughout the website; this is also confirmed by the rating from survey respondents. A more consistent design could be followed in the navigation and on some specific pages.

**Logical organization:** the website currently has three types of navigation; main, news and documents. In addition, several other navigational items could create potential confusion for a visitor. (E.g. jobs, maps & forum link). In addition, the navigation for the most popular section of the site "News Updates / Opinions" is not displayed on the home page. Further, the use of the "downloading documents" label on the right hand navigation can be confusing as "documents" also appears in the main navigation.

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<sup>8</sup> Downloading speed can depend on various factors including: **User side:** the type of connection (modem, ISDN, etc.), the strength of the internet (provider) connection, the capacity of the user's computer. **Website side:** the server capacity, the structure of the website, the use of databases and the use of images and text on the website.

## 6.4.2 Website Management

The Gurtong webmasters provided the evaluation team with a technical report<sup>9</sup>. Based on this report and feedback from the Gurtong team, the following points are highlighted:

**Costing:** the current fees paid for website hosting and software are reasonable based on the current market offering. The only fee, which is difficult for the undersigned to judge, is the broadband Internet fee (\$5,774). Compared to broadband offerings in UK, the fee is expensive (a similar service in the UK would cost approximately \$800). However, a cost estimate would have to be made against similar offerings in Kenya.

**Back-up & software:** as recommended in the technical report, a more developed online backup plan is recommended. The proposal to have an external technical support is also supported as is the purchase of the necessary software needed for professional website production (i.e. Adobe suite).

**Content management:** currently the webmasters must add all content to the website themselves (using a Macromedia tool). There is no tool for web content management. Such tool would allow the Gurtong editorial staff to add news items themselves with little technical knowledge required. In addition, this would free up the webmasters from the routine updating work and allow them to work on more complex content and pages.

**Visit length and page views:** The average length of individual visits and number page viewed per session to the website is also a good indication of a site's popularity. The average length of a visit to the site was 7.46 minutes with 3.47 pages viewed. This is a very high result for the time spent on a website. Consequently, website visitors are spending considerable more time on the pages of the Gurtong website compared to the average website.

**Referrals:** Another indicator is if the website is receiving traffic from other websites or search engines. Over the time period, 87% were "no referral" meaning that they entered the name "www.gurtong.org" into their internet window (indicating good visibility - that the site visitors were already aware of the website) with the remaining of visitors mainly referred from search engines (google, msn & yahoo) and from Sudanforum.net<sup>10</sup>. For details and recommendations, please consult the annexed report 2.

## 6.5 Gurtong Organizational Management

### 6.5.1 Advisory Board and Steering

Advisors do allow Gurtong to present itself with prestigious personalities and therefore create ownership and identity. Advisors do have a distinguished status in society and additionally give advise to the Gurtong Trust on how best to serve society. The share the objectives of Gurtong and support its efforts<sup>11</sup>. Advisors do represent society and it is adequate to have sufficient advisors with roots into Sudan. The editor would like to increase the board of advisors and benefit more from their advice. Suggestions to enlarge

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<sup>9</sup> Gurtong Peace Trust: Website Technical Report", Margaret Katunge, November 2006.

<sup>10</sup> For the time period, December 2004 to November 2006, [www.sudanforum.net](http://www.sudanforum.net) referred 4,498 visitors to the Gurtong website.

<sup>11</sup> Mr Charles Bakheit responded in length to a series of questions addressed to advisors per email.

the Advisory board include Juba Professor Taban Lio Lyong, the King of Adwak and Paride Taban, former Bishop of Torit.

### **6.5.2 Trust Management**

The Gurtong Peace Trust is registered, has legal setting and financial audit in Kenya. It is financed through a partner agreement with the DFA.

The creation of a trust has been extremely smooth and the transfer from a DFA funded project towards the creation of an independent institution funded by a partner contract agreement has been extremely successful. The management shift with a new director and staff as well as a geographical shift from London to Nairobi did not affect the attractiveness of the site for users. DFA directly funded the key supervisor and the director and therefore could keep tight control and avoid conflicts in the transfer process. However, there was a period in 2005, when the discussion board was not sufficiently monitored, and severe measures were introduced to regain control.

Gurtong's management in Nairobi is well organized with established operational procedures and policies. The office works within the legal frame and is in process to achieve tax exemption, this process is supported and reported regularly by legal advisors in Kenya.

### **6.5.3 Administration Management**

All legal requirements are met; registration, government taxes and working permits for local and expatriate staff are valid. Gurtong currently operates two Bank accounts with Diamond trust Bank of Kenya (USD and Kshs) and follows its internal operational Manual for Admin/Accounts. The transactions are mostly operated in the shilling account, disbursements from donors are received in USD. For any transaction to be effected, two signatories to sign against the transactions (Director Gurtong / Coordinator) are required. The logistician is responsible for cash matters. Plans are underway to acquire accounting software for ease of reporting. A first successful audit with Ernest & Young for the financial year 2005 was carried out in February 2006 and the audit report indicate that funds were being used in an efficient and economical manner in accordance with the agreements between Gurtong Peace Trust and DFA.

Gurtong has its assets insured starting Nov 2006 by Lion of Kenya Insurance Company Ltd. However, staff has no specific health and accident coverage, but such insurance is largely applied within INGO with staff in Kenya using public and / or private transport to move around.

### **6.5.4 Website Management**

Website Management is done in Nairobi. The website has a continuous increase of visitors and has improved heavily in its visual outline and the navigation. The site is fast and no critics have emerged from users.

However, Gurtong depends heavily on its Webmaster, who does site management and posting in an accurate way. However, if the Webmaster is unavailable, web management is at risk. The Webmaster mentions that there is a person that knows the site architecture. This person could support the team in emergencies, but the evaluator has not verified his qualifications and expertise.

The site has not a copy on a backup server. Modifications are done on the existing site and limit interventions / or accessibility during such undertaking.

The editing team is not utilizing a content management system to post directly contributions but does send it to the webmaster for posting. There were critics, that

posting is slow and sometimes documents got lost, but the evaluator was not in a position to verify such critics. However, normally the date of posting is missing on the site and this makes it difficult for users to know, when contributions are posted.

The site is visually very attractive but navigation; search engine and print function are underdeveloped and make document research sometimes difficult.

### **6.5.5 Budget**

Gurtong's budget of adequate. However, costs reflected are below planned figures for more than 50%. The reasons are explained in quarterly reporting: Gurtong had severe difficulties to establish a correspondent and newsgathering network in South Sudan. Under-spending is related to these positions, to staff salaries, transport and logistics and training costs. Establishing a correspondents network remains a key target, therefore the budget should not be reduced next year, but reconsider such budget position with even higher amounts for undertakings in Juba.

Training budget could have served to upgrade staff in Nairobi on editorial matters, unfortunately such trainings were not considered by the Gurtong team.

## **7 Findings**

### **7.1 An on-line Media with high Editorial Quality and a Non-Partisan Editorial Policy**

Gurtong provides an Internet platform and a mature online media.

It has a balanced mix of news, opinions, and discussion board, background material and analysis, as well as practical information.

It has been confirmed that Gurtong's policy to allow "opposite" opinions on the site is generally well perceived and allows journalists and decision makers to "sense" the pulse of the Diaspora and opposition thoughts. It is therefore of key importance for Gurtong to safeguard its policy to be broad on information and topics, and covering the various sections of interest.

Gurtong's editorial policy is widely recognized by users. It is seen a result of Jacob Akol's editorial experience and sensitivity about self-censorship. Site statistics prove that it has an established place for information on South Sudan and a constant number of readers with a profound interest.

Policy makers do not over appreciate Gurtong. GOSS staff is able to appreciate criticism and tolerance – a rather opposing concept to the former GOS policy makers. GOSS staff has experience liberal media in Kenya and Uganda and know that leaders may benefit from liberal media. However, leaders expect media to have an adequate level of self-censorship and "etiquette". Even more, some critics were raised that Gurtong should not allow opposing postings on the site. Users (interviews and survey) agree that the website meets its objectives in terms of a constructive discussion on South Sudan, as strengthening the links between the Diaspora and residents of South Sudan and providing a balanced source of information.

The majority of respondents of the survey are Diaspora, some 34% do not agree or are unsure about whether the Gurtong website facilitates a discussion among the Diaspora. Comments on this question were left by 23 respondents with most focusing on how the site serves mainly the Diaspora and the perceived tribal bias of the site. (see annexed report for quotes)

However, such critical opinions are not dominant in the evaluation findings, and Gurtong has earned a reputation of being unbiased. Gurtong allows opinions posts about opposing thoughts, which are otherwise highly sensitive in the country. It has not experienced any damage or security threats so far.

## 7.2 A Website meeting its Objectives in the Diaspora

The evaluation shows that the overall objectives are met, but different methodological approaches were required to confirm these findings.

The content analysis, survey and site statistics confirmed that Gurtong

- facilitates and encourages a constructive discussion about South Sudan
- serves as a balanced source of cultural, social, political and humanitarian information about South Sudan

The interviews in Juba and Nairobi and site statistics confirmed that Gurtong

- facilitates a constructive discussion inside South Sudan
- strengthens the link between the Diaspora and people living in South Sudan

The evaluation did not look into direct links among the Diaspora. However, the interviews, survey results and analysis of the discussion board confirm that Gurtong is widely used by the Diaspora as platform to communicate. Therefore, the evaluation confirms that Gurtong

- Facilitates a constructive discussion among the Diaspora

## 7.3 An Influential Website in South Sudan

With an average of 50'000 visits per month, Gurtong has great influence on suggestions about what is of public interest.

Political leaders and journalists in Sudan have long recognized the importance of the site. Gurtong can contribute towards a better understanding of key issues widely discussed in South Sudan. Jacob Akol promotes as chairman of AMDISS the legislation of "right of free expression" within GOSS.

Gurtong.org contributes to:

- The liberty of expression, based on factual news, good editing and balanced opinions in the context of South Sudan.
- The Internet being a driving force and print media restrictions will not limit news and opinions from being disseminated.
- The Diaspora having a high demand and increasing influence, as for them the site provides accurate and meaningful information.
- Accessing important background material. Such documents contribute to a better understanding of situations, facilitates discussions on accurate information, and limits the influence of rumors and prejudices in-country and in the Diaspora.

The evaluator observed a starting debate on the issue of power sharing, the issue of identity and participation of ethnic groups as stimulated by the house of chief is just

starting. Gurtong is the sole source of such information and web statistics show that consulting such pages have highest ranking (Rank two for "opinions", rank three for "peoples and tribes").

The website, therefore, contributes actively to a higher understanding of ethnic differences in the country and delivers information to enable policy makers to realize and respect that there are many different minorities in South Sudan. Gurtong reports on such minorities and, therefore, enables a discussion about minority issues and minority participation.

#### **7.4 A website with an Interesting and Lively Discussion Board**

Topics chosen by Gurtong do meet the objective of the project. It is important for GDB to create a discussion among many people and an exchange of many different perspectives. The more people start postings in a forum, the more attractive the forum is for a wider audience. There are two forums, which have very low values for replies per posting and views per posting, Human Rights issues, and Health issues. Both Health and Human Rights issues, by the way, could be considered important to local people by outside experts, but do not seem to matter to the people writing in or looking at GDB.

It is interesting to see that the debate the House of Nationalities has received such high interest on Gurtong. It shows that the Swiss Government approach to promote the House of Nationalities is of public interest. It is also of interest to see that the Forum topic "Youth vision for South Sudan" is equally attractive. There is room to explore and debate about such issues and to further understand how they are linked. Issues like "generation and war gap" and the requirement of the Diaspora youth generation to debate about their own roots, their link with in-country traditional society and cultural identity. However, the analysis shows that the moderator cannot take over the role of the person setting discussions, at least not single-handedly. Nevertheless, the moderator takes over a very important role in supervising the discussion, for there is always potential for personal insult and aggression in the discussions.

#### **7.5 Shortcomings in Editorial Update and Users wanting more email based services**

Access and availability of accurate news and information gathering therefore remains a key problem, recognized by Gurtong team members and all journalists interviewed. Gurtong maintains the strategy to increase the number of in-country correspondents to foster production of features stories and to verify information and update background material and news sources.

The survey and interviews showed that users have difficulties in handling updates and did not like to spend time surfing or searching the site frequently for updates or new documents. Information is not sufficiently updated.

However, Gurtong did not have sufficient capacity to monitor and update background material on a regular basis during 2005 and 2006. In-country correspondents who should have conducted such verification were not available. Additional efforts are insufficient: logistics, web-access, qualification and supervision in Nairobi were probably not sufficient to satisfy demands.

Interviewees express frustration about the difficulty in finding certain documents and forms (e.g. Darfur Peace Agreements) on Gurtong. They wonder whether Gurtong could not post such kind of information related to its peace promotion mandate.

Users in Juba, Nairobi and those questioned in the survey would like to receive more updated information through direct mailing. Information mentioned includes newsletters, daily news updates, job opportunities and a monthly discussion board summary.

Survey respondents provided feedback about various content and tools that they would like to see on the Gurtong website. Respondents mentioned the following content themes they would like to see developed:

- **News:** main comment being to update the news more frequently
- **Arts:** poetry and music were mentioned in particular
- **Photos:** gallery of photographs from South Sudan of main towns and latest developments (especially requested by Diaspora).

More content on "development" and "civic education" were also mentioned. In terms of particular website tools, the following were mentioned by respondents: print page function, video clips and audio files.

## 8 Recommendations

### 8.1 Increase outreach in South Sudan through existing media

Sudanese Diaspora is a power factor in South Sudan, it does influence opinion and political decision making. Gurtong is an advocating tool for linking Diaspora and South Sudan actors and users have a high level of satisfaction.

However, Gurtong's **outreach in South Sudan** is extremely limited due to little to no Internet access and high illiteracy. Only journalists and policy makers are able to access the site regularly.

By date, only radios and print media are adequate tools for disseminating information and opinions within South Sudan. There is a general trend to give preference to those institutions for the dissemination of information. The Sudan Radio Service launches a first FM relay station in Juba, Miraya FM (UN) intends on establishing an FM network all over the South. In addition, Internews is about to launch a community radio project. Print media opened offices in Juba for news gathering, but have limited editions due to the high illiteracy and logistic problems in the area. However, they all expect returns on investments, continuously upgrading and promoting their newspapers.

Gurtong's particular and valuable information about ethnic groups, critical opinions and accurate feature stories is of interest in the South Sudan. It would enable further debate and a sound dissemination policy would serve the objectives of Gurtong even further.

Gurtong can contribute to improving people's access to information by promoting its product through established media without competing with them. Local print media reach roughly 100'000 people and FM radios; by the end of 2007, will cover most areas in South Sudan.

Gurtong can benefit from such infrastructures and, based on its own good reputation, may utilize existing media for the dissemination of its products. It is risky for Gurtong not to foster such an approach, as the site may lose its influence on policy makers and opinion leaders in the country. Gurtong could enable:

- Co-production of monthly supplements in Newspapers like Juba Post, Khartoum Monitor, Sudan Tribune (if 5000 copies are read by an average of 20 people, these newspaper reach 100'000 persons/each). Such supplements are an important income for print media.
- Production of monthly or bimonthly Radio debates based on the opinion and topics discussed on the discussion board. Key persons can be called for voices and a debate summary with some adds on site updates can be produced either with Juba based radios, or in Nairobi with SRS or IRIN Regional Radio. (E.g. Miraya FM has sent a feature from IRIN Radio (Lost Boys) over 8 times).
- Update newsletter based on the example of <http://www.scidev.net>. This is a website with similar features that has built a subscription link so that subscriber get an alert for a weekly update. It would allow Gurtong to send a continuous reminder to those interested, helps to build a database on users that might be utilized for various purposes and additionally helps to monitor updates and updating internally.

## 8.2 Steering Board for transparency and donor fund management

Today's management reflects the initial phase of the Gurtong Project. Trustees meet in the annual advisory meeting together with Advisors and Gurtong staff and DFA staff (external supervisor, Gurtong Director and DFA Sudan Desk, all funded directly by DFA).

This board meets the second time soonest and will decide on major issues. Such organizational setup is adequate for fostering the initiative, but it might not be sustainable for the Trust, if DFA retreats or if new donor's are invited for funding.

If Gurtong Trust plans to grow or diversify funding, a further improvement of the steering structure could guarantee continuous management quality. It might be adequate to create a **steering board** rather than to engage the trustees and advisors into the management. It would allow board members and external observers to better distinguish Gurtong from the various other activities and allow presenting the institution with a sound steering structure to potential funding partners.

However, legal advisors and auditors are satisfied with today's setup and administration.

## 8.3 Recruit local executive staff with journalistic qualifications, and correspondents in South Sudan

The Gurtong team is fully aware of shortcomings in update management and the lack of a good correspondent network in South Sudan. However, it is recommended to recruit executive staff in Nairobi (or later Juba), having better **editorial and journalistic qualifications** than today's locally employed staff. It is also recommended to allocate sufficient funds for further improve correspondent network in South Sudan for update management and news gathering.

## 8.4 Reorganise site navigation and content management

To improve the experience for website visitors, reorganising the **site navigation**<sup>12</sup> is recommended. It would be useful to introduce new tools/features and improve existing ones; introduce daily email updates, job updates by email "contact us" page, rss feed, print page function, photo gallery, video and audio files, arts and development content and improve the search system and document details (posting date) as well as the site map.

It would be helpful to introduce a **content management system** to enable quick updating of news and opinions by Gurtong editorial staff directly, avoiding to post articles through the webmaster. This would alleviate any challenges related to updates, as editorial staff would have access to post contributions directly and it would free the webmaster to concentrate on the improvement of the site.

(A lot more information is in the annexed website evaluation report from Glenn O'Neil.)

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<sup>12</sup> Introduce new tools/features and improve existing ones, introduce daily email updates, job updates by email "contact us" page, rss feed, print page function, photo gallery, video and audio files, arts and development content and improve the search and site map.

## 9 Evaluation Team

The evaluation team consists of a Coordinator and two technical consultants:

**Peter Aeberhard, MSc**, will serve as Project Coordinator. He is founder and President of Aeberhard Consulting and has 15 years of experience with Southern Sudan in various functions. He worked until recently as Director of Fondation Hirondelle ([www.hirondelle.org](http://www.hirondelle.org)). He has also worked as Coordinator of the Sudan Roundtable at KOFF, Swisspeace, pioneered the building the peace promotion desk in Caritas/Switzerland, and was Director of their regional office in Nairobi for four years. He has worked as a consultant in various conflict zones and various peace missions. He is Co-chair of FFF, the Swiss Branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).

**Guido Keel MSc**, is lecturer at the Institute of Applied Media Studies (IAM) of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur. He is part of the research group analysing Media in Development and has done research on media quality in Armenia and Congo. Besides, he coordinated a research project on how journalists use and apply the internet for their work; before, he was working as PR-consultant for various Swiss companies and as online journalist.

**Glenn O'Neil, MSc**, Evaluation Consultant for Benchpoint, Switzerland. ([www.benchpoint.ch](http://www.benchpoint.ch)). Glenn has undertaken evaluation projects (including web site evaluations) for various companies and organisations including Nestlé, UEFA, ISO, IMD, WWF International and IOC. He teaches marketing and internet courses in educational institutes in Switzerland and is Adjunct Professor, Media and Communications at the International University in Geneva. Prior to this, Glenn managed communication programs for the International Red Cross in Africa, Asia and Europe.

## 10 Name Table (Juba and Nairobi Interviewees)

Charles	Bakheit	Advisor Gurtong Trust
Andrea	Reichlin	Advisor Embassy of Switzerland in Karthoum
George	Kibuchi	BSF (DIFID/GOSS) Juba Office
Marc	Bloch	Caritas Switzerland, Regional Representative
Gathoni	Macharia	Caritas Switzerland, Sudan Coordinator NBI
Petros	Wontamo	CEAS Coordinator, Nairobi Office
Edward	Lino	Commander SPLA / LRA Negotiations
Beatrice	Khamisa Wani	Coordinator of NS-WATCH
Salman	Bal	EDA PAIV
Conrad	Perner Kwacakworo	EDA PAIV
Jeremy	Groce	EDC, Sudan Radio Service Chief of Party
Peter	Baumgartner	Former Correspondant Tages Anzeiger
Dr Samson	Kwaje	GOSS Min of Information and Broadcasting, Hon Minister
Beatrice	Khamisa Wani	GOSS Min of Regional Cooperation, Director for Multilateral
Dr Benjamin	Barnaba Marial	GOSS Min. of Regional Cooperation Hon. Minister
James	Morgan	GOSS Office of the President, Writer of the President
Ayom	Wol Dhal	GOSS Office of the President, Deputy Director Information
Luka	Maniak Hol	GOSS Office of the President, Press Officer for the President
Jacob J	Akol	Gurtong Director
Cecilia	Nanfuka	Gurtong Editor
Ted	Mwabili	Gurtong Informatic Consultant
Amer	Ajok	Gurtong Project Coordinator
Elisabeth	Mwangi	Gurtong Receptionist
James	Oryema	Gurtong Trustee
Margaret	Katunge	Gurtong Website Manager
Sally	Chin	International Crisis Group, Darfur Analyst, Nairobi Office
Ogoso Erich	Opolot	IRIN Chef de Bureau (News)
Pat	Banks	IRIN Chief Coordinator
Jane Basa	Namurye	IRIN Radio Producer
Gabriel Galuak	Kuinin	IRIN Radio Producer
Kasang	Dedi Sei	IRIN Radio Producer
Louise	Tunbridge	IRIN Radio Regional Project Mng
Bullen	Kenyk Yatta	Juba Post Coordinating Editor
Charles	Rehan Surur	Juba Post Publisher
Thomas	Rhodes	Juba Post Supervisor
Dickson	Lenga Surur	Juba Post Yei Office
Alfred	Taban	Karthoum Monitor, Publisher and Chief Editor
James	Lemor	Radio Juba, Producer / Karthoum Monitor Writer
Christoph	Lang	SDC Juba Office
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Mitch	Odero	Sudan Mirror, Managing Editor
Albino	Okeny	Sudan Radio Service, Deputy Chief of Mission
Rebecca	Okwaci	Sudan Radio Service, Programme Producer
William Ezekial	Kuju Deng	Sudan Tribune Publisher and Chief Editor
Teody AD	Lotto	Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace SWAN, Board Member
Christine	Yangi Abina	Tokten UNDP Juba Office
Doughan	Ryan	Trocaire Sudan Advocacy Coordinator, Nairobi Office
Antoinette	Miday	UNDP Southern Sudan Communication Officer
Lon Lyon	Taban	University of Juba, Professor of Arts
Ian	Noble	UNMIS Radio Miraya, Coordinator FH
Huub	Gales	UNMIS Radio Miraya, Director Juba Office
Richard	Kamis	UNMIS Radio Miraya, Producing Editor
Valerie	Masuka	UNMIS Radio Miraya, Producing Editor
Philip	Ward	White Nile LTD, Chief Operations Officer