

# **CHAD: THE CHAD/CAMEROON PIPELINE PROJECT**

by Delphine Djiraibe\*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Chad/Cameroon oil exploitation and pipeline project, commonly known as the “Chad/Cameroon project,” has two parts: (1) the extraction of oil from three oil fields in the Doba Basin, located in the southern part of Chad; and (2) the construction of 1070 km of pipeline from the Doba basin to Kribi on the Atlantic coast of Cameroon. An oil consortium made up of Exxon, Chevron, and Petronas is doing the work. The World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and commercial banks are financing the project. The World Bank classified the project as a “Category A project,” which means that the project carries many risks. These include environmental degradation and human rights violations related to the volatile social and political situation in Chad.

The World Bank’s involvement was controversial. The World Bank wanted to promote development, and claimed that the Chad/Cameroon project was a “unique opportunity for Chad to alleviate poverty.” But the oil project cannot help alleviate poverty as it was designed. More time was needed to establish the necessary conditions for such a project in Chad. These included creating additional legal infrastructure; training of local people to deal with compensation issues; making information available for local people to educate them about the positive and negative impacts of the project; and encouraging the government to become more democratic and transparent in the management of funds and public affairs. Despite efforts of an international network of advocates, the World Bank approved the project on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2000, and construction started on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2000.

## **THE STATUS OF NGOs IN CHAD**

There are two types of NGOs in Chad: Development NGOs and Human Rights NGOs. Most of the national level NGOs focus on development issues. Development NGOs must sign an agreement with the government. This agreement specifies the activities that the NGO is allowed to undertake. As a result, the government can withdraw an NGO’s authorization at anytime if it feels that the NGO is acting outside of the scope of its competence.

Human rights NGOs, on the other hand, are called “Associations.” They are governed by a law, “ordonance 27 de 1962,” which regulates the constitution and management of associations. They must be non-profit and non-political organizations. Once they are officially authorized, the government cannot easily close them down. As such, they have more power than development NGOs.

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\* The author is President, Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (Association Tchadienne pour la Promotion et la Defense des Droits de l’Homme).

Civil society in Chad working on the Chad/Cameroon project is made up of human rights and development NGOs, women's associations, grassroots organizations, and trade unions.

The government itself has created a number of NGOs and constituted its own civil society. People call these NGOs the "governmental non-governmental organizations" (GONGO).

## **PROJECT BEGINNINGS**

When I first heard about the oil exploitation project in 1996, I learned that the World Bank viewed the project as a poverty reduction project. But such a project cannot reduce poverty without democracy, good governance, human rights, and peace in the host country. While I was in Burkina Faso, my colleagues in Chad started to work on the issue by organizing meetings, looking for information, and trying to harmonize their position.

Thanks to help from Amnesty International Germany, we connected with Environmental Defense, a U.S. NGO, that developed a campaign in the United States and Europe on the project. These NGOs helped us set up meetings, create an international network on the project, and distribute material and information regarding the issues.

None of the advocates opposed the project. Everybody wanted the oil in Chad to be exploited; however, there was a general consensus – excluding the government and its allies – that certain minimum conditions should be in place before the project could start. NGOs within the Civil Society Advocacy Network asked the World Bank not to finance the project until those conditions were in place.

## **ADVOCACY TOOLS**

The Advocacy Network used many tools as the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project developed. Local NGOs worked as a team to gather information, study the subject, and develop strategies. We also established a national network of civil society both in Chad and Cameroon to work on the project. The network involved human rights organizations, trade unions, development NGOs, women's organizations, and grassroots organizations. The national network was well connected with the independent newspapers. It was the first time that all of these organizations came together to establish a network and a media strategy.

Independent newspapers were not part of the civil society network, but they agreed to publish items recommended by the national network without charge. Furthermore, independent newspapers offered to follow the civil society network and to report on its activities.

At the international level, especially in the United States and Europe, a network of human rights organizations was established to lobby the World Bank and donor

governments to delay the project. The international and national networks were well connected, and the information collected on the ground was used in Washington, D.C., the Netherlands, Germany, and France. The national network was connected to the international network and information flowed from one network to the other.

The first big meeting was organized in the town of Donian, in the southern Chad oil region. The Donian meeting was the first meeting where different actors were invited to present their understanding of the project and share opinions on it. From the NGO side, it was clearly stated that conditions were not yet in place for the project to start. The civil society organizations at the meeting asked the World Bank to put the project on hold. The meeting produced a written statement called the “Appeal from Donian,” which laid out some conditions to be met before the project could start. These include peace, democracy, respect for human rights, and good governance. We published press releases and made public statements to put pressure on the World Bank and the Chadian government.

After the Donian meeting, civil society organizations set up another meeting in Bebedja to decide on strategies for advocacy. It was decided in Bebedja to call for a two-year moratorium and to establish a civil society advocacy network. The Bebedja Declaration was adopted.

The civil society network met with the oil consortium at the time (ExxonMobil, Shell, and Elf), the World Bank, and government representatives to emphasize our demands and to call for a moratorium. The Network organized press conferences and dinners to talk to and lobby stakeholders.

We lobbied governments abroad and the World Bank, and tried to make the public aware of the use of taxpayers’ money to support a questionable project. I traveled several times (along with colleagues from Cameroon), to Washington to testify before the World Bank, the U.S. Congress, and other government officials about what was happening in Chad and Cameroon.

In 2000, I accepted a fellowship from the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). I stayed in Washington for a year and worked with NGOs there to make the voice of the local people heard. My presence gave international NGOs more legitimacy to talk in the name of local people, and gave me the opportunity to speak directly to executive directors and to U.S. government officials. I tried to make them aware of the risks that the project carries, considering the situation in Chad.

It was important for us to make the Chadian government take a public position in order to have public debate on the matter. We encouraged this by publishing press releases and by organizing non-violent demonstrations around the human rights violations related to the project. For example, we organized three days of mourning when government soldiers killed civilians in the oil region. The government reacted by closing down human rights organizations. It later backed down because of international community pressure.

## **OUTCOME OF THE ADVOCACY PROCESS**

As a result of the advocacy work, the World Bank rejected the consortium's first environmental impact assessment (EIA). Completing an EIA was a requirement for World Bank involvement in the project. Civil society demonstrated that the consultations were not done properly and that the EIA failed to provide effective answers to expected environmental degradation and human rights violations related to the project. The consultations were done in the presence of soldiers in a region already traumatized by massacres carried out by government soldiers. People were afraid and could not speak out. Information was given in French and in highly technical language that people could not understand.

To provide a more detailed assessment on the environmental and social impacts of the project, 19 volumes of documents were produced as the second EIA. But again, these materials provided no adequate answer to civil society's concerns.

A law on the management of oil revenue was adopted, and a Local Oversight Committee was set up, which included civil society representatives. The World Bank approved the project in June 2000, and construction started shortly thereafter. An International Advisory Group was established in February 2001 to monitor the implementation of the project.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- **To work together in an efficient way, advocates must have the same goal.**

Members of our network had diverse interests. Some wanted to obtain contracts in the oil field or to work with the World Bank as consultants. Others wanted to preserve their relationship with the government. In this context, it was difficult to keep the network united. We failed to find a common interest and stick to it while carrying out the advocacy work.

The local network was very active from the beginning until the Bebedja meeting. Then it collapsed because the interests became too diverse. Political and economic pressure on both local and international NGO representatives proved very troubling.

The international network worked better because it had common goals. Members all worked in the fields of human rights or the environment (or both) and had adequate means to support themselves. They did not have to fear for their lives because of repression or financial insecurity; they were not worried about food, health care, and housing.

- **Advocates must have resources.**

For advocacy to be effective, both human and financial resources must be available.

**Human resources:** Most NGO representatives are volunteers who work elsewhere to earn a living. They do not have time to concentrate on the advocacy work alone. Most volunteers are not experts in the areas where expertise is needed, and it is not easy to learn the necessary skills for advocacy in a timely manner. For example, NGO members of the civil society advocacy network lacked the expertise necessary to define the negative impact of the project on the environment. Nor did they have money to hire a consultant. Therefore, they were unable to oppose the second EIA very effectively.

**Financial resources:** Advocacy work must be quick and efficient. It is dangerous to depend on external funding, which is sometimes not available in time to meet pressing demands. For example, NGO representatives in the civil society advocacy network did not have the financial resources needed to do the work.

- **Advocates must define their own agenda and convince sponsors to fund it.**

The fact that the oil project was not on the agenda of the member organizations caused several difficulties. It was very difficult for NGOs to raise funds for the advocacy work because it was also not on the agenda of their sponsors. Many groups had to wait one year to be able to raise money for the work. Therefore, we lost many opportunities. Small grants from Environmental Defense (ED), Global Green Grants Fund (GGF), the Bank Information Center (BIC), the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), and Bread for the World (BFW) were very useful. Although these grants helped us organize meetings and set up a network, they did not provide enough money to fund all aspects of our strategy.

- **Advocates must be flexible and respond to needs in a timely manner.**

One of the problems we had was that people in the network were often unavailable because they had their own agenda for their NGO. It was difficult for people to find enough time for the advocacy work on the project. It was also difficult to modify the agenda and to make it suitable to the advocacy program.

We were able, however, to adopt a schedule to address environmental and human rights issues, as well as the management of revenues to reach these goals. This served as the agenda for our advocacy work. Meetings, press conferences, public debates, studies, and training events were on the schedule.

- **Advocates must do their research.**

The results we gained were small because we did not have sufficient information while developing our strategy. For example, we did not really know who our enemies or allies were. All NGOs within the network were not allies.

Many local NGOs did not know the institutions involved in the project. For example, some thought that the World Bank was an ally and treated it as such. The lack of financial, material, and human resources, along with a lack of information and knowledge about oil, and the international financial institutions, had a negative impact on the advocacy.

- **Advocates are constrained by conditions in their country.**

The advocacy strategy did not reach its expected goals in part because of political, economic and social factors present in Chad. These factors include:

**Repression:** The government threatened human rights activists working on the advocacy program. Some of them were arrested and detained without charge. Some had to leave the country for their safety. This was the case for Yorongar Ngarledji, a Deputy from the oil region. He was arrested in 1998 and imprisoned for 8 months because he spoke out about the negative impact of the project, and supported the moratorium. I was also obliged to leave the country, because I was the spokesperson for the civil society advocacy network. The government set up a radio and TV campaign asking the population to take action against me.

**Corruption:** Corruption in Chad takes place behind the scenes. The government and others used various “subterfuges,” including false statements, offers of jobs and consultancies, and travel to the United States to attract NGO representatives to work with them and to join their side.

**Lack of communication and information:** Information must be accurate and be available in a timely manner. NGOs often lack adequate skills to collect data and to manage information, and they have limited means of communication. The level of communications and information technology is very low in Chad. Connection to the Internet is slow and expensive. It took too long for information from the ground to reach the capital city in order to make advocacy function effectively.

Maintaining the link between national and international NGOs was not easy, and there was a delay in the flow of information. Also, project proponents mounted a campaign to discredit NGOs by saying that northern NGOs were misleading southern NGOs. The claim was that northern NGOs were unaware of the poverty conditions in Chad and Cameroon. The objective of this campaign was to “delegitimize” NGOs’ work by saying that they had no mandate to speak on behalf of people on the ground.

**Poverty:** Chad is one of the poorest countries in the world. Access to drinking water, food, and health care remains a major problem. Many people are dying of hunger. The government and their allies used these facts to make people accept the project.

The consultation process provided an opportunity for the oil consortium to sell the project. When they went to the villages, they revealed only the positive side of the project. People were told that the project would improve their quality of life, and that they would gain money and wealth. No one could refuse something that was supposed to make life better.

**Ignorance:** Finally, the illiteracy rate is high in Chad – about 90%. People had difficulty understanding presentations of highly technical and complicated information in French. People were manipulated to oppose the civil society advocacy network. The only grassroots organization, named EPOZOP, was denied an official authorization to function.

- **Results achieved by the advocacy**

The advocacy network did achieve some changes to the project. A law on management of project revenue was adopted, and this law established an Oversight Committee. We also obtained an increase in the number of civil society representatives on the Oversight Committee. Our work led to the withdrawal of Shell and Elf, and the rejection of a flawed environmental impact assessment.

The advocacy work of civil society, both internationally and nationally, helped to keep public attention on the project. The Chad/Cameroon project is frequently referred to as the most controlled project because several monitoring bodies have been set up within the World Bank and at the national level, including the International Advisory Group. But these mechanisms are not as efficient as one might wish, and their impact on the implementation of the project is in question. Many students from all over the world have taken this as a topic for their doctorate or masters theses. We have asked Harvard University to comment on the oil revenue management law. The Chad/Cameroon project is known throughout the world, in part because of the work done by civil society.

The oil project implicated the interests of rich and powerful countries, such as the United States. These countries often fail to consider the interests of poor countries in human rights and environmental protection.

Since the World Bank approved the project, the things that civil society was worried about are happening. In Chad, it is difficult to monitor the project. The consortium is doing the construction work with such speed that both civil society and the government do not have the capacity to follow it. The civil society advocacy network collapsed due in part to fatigue and disappointment. Another structure was put in place composed of decentralized advocacy groups working on the project. They are trying hard

to get back on track, but it is not easy as they do not have capacity and the project is moving quickly. Oil will start flowing by the end of 2003.