

DDR in South Sudan

Introduction

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme in South Sudan can be divided into two phases. The first phase ran from 2005 and will draw to an end by early 2012, while the second phase is still in the planning stages. Although the same programme organizers are involved in phase 2, the programme's direction and objectives have altered significantly from the first phase.

Phase 1

The first phase of DDR was mandated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which stipulated that a programme should be carried out in North and South Sudan based on the principle of the proportional downsizing of the respective armies. It was agreed that 90,000 ex-combatants would be demobilized in South Sudan and the same number in the North. The programme got off to a slow start, however, and it was not until June 2009 that demobilization actually began. Phase 1 focused on processing what were subsequently called Special Needs Groups (SNGs) associated with armed forces and groups, i.e. women, the disabled, the elderly, and children.

By any criteria, phase 1 can be judged as having largely failed, for the following reasons:

- Less than 13 per cent of the planned caseload entered the programme, with even fewer participants completing it.
- A significant proportion of participants were technically ineligible according to the programme's own criteria—many had never taken part in the war and others had left the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) long before the programme started.
- 'Reintegration training' was largely evaluated as having been ineffective and unsuccessful.
- The programme had no discernible impact on human security in South Sudan.
- Rather than decreasing in size, the SPLA actually grew larger during the six years of the CPA's interim period, thanks to continued recruitment and the integration of a number of militia groups as part of amnesty packages.

The decision to radically redesign the programme was motivated by a number of factors. The most compelling reason was the fact that it simply was not achieving the desired results. Related to this, it was necessary to design a new programme that addressed the specific South Sudanese context. Secondly, with the CPA due to expire in July 2011, there was no longer an obligation to pursue a programme parallel to the one in North Sudan. The expiration of the CPA also meant that donors were freed of their commitment to continue funding a Southern programme that was clearly failing, but had to be continued as part of the peace process. Thirdly, with Southern independence from the North secured in July 2011, the SPLA began to look at the DDR programme with a new perspective, attracted by the possibility that it would help to reduce the army's inflated size and enormous salary bill.

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In February 2011 a freeze was put on new participants entering the programme. Participants who have already started will be allowed to complete their training, and phase 1 will draw to a close before March 2012.¹

It remains unclear exactly how much phase 1 cost in South Sudan, as the funding was granted to a DDR programme in a still-united Sudan. It is known, however, that USD 165 million was pledged for the entire programme (in both the North and the South), although not all of this was received. One DDR expert estimated that just a quarter of amount received went to the Southern programme—the rest going to the North.

Phase 2

Planning

Phase 2 planning began at a conference organized by the South Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC) in October 2010. Most activities in South Sudan then stalled over the course of the referendum period and in early/mid-2011 the SSDDRC and SPLA held discussions about the needs and structure of a new programme. These discussions, which eventually included UN agencies, resulted in a 20-page draft policy document outlining the main objectives, principles, and mechanisms of the second phase.

In August 2011 the UN Development Programme (UNDP) organized a four-day workshop that included a wide range of stakeholders, including the SSDDRC, the SPLA, donors, government ministries, NGOs, and international DDR experts. Arising from the workshop, a separate and detailed Strategic Plan was drawn up that delineates the responsibilities of the various programme partners. While it was subsequently widely agreed that the ‘big tent’ approach of the August workshop was extremely beneficial in creating a programme in which all partners recognized their potential roles and responsibilities, there was also concern that the workshop organizers were ‘resource blind’, i.e. pushing for an idealistic programme regardless of the cost. Another concern was the notable absence of representation from the police and wildlife services, two of the target groups for phase 2.

Policy and programme

The phase 2 objectives are significantly different from those of phase 1. It is clear that both the SPLA leadership and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) view the potential of a DDR programme in South Sudan as being different from ‘traditional’ DDR programmes elsewhere in the world. Rather than using DDR as a tool to improve human security—rhetoric that the international partners and the SSDDRC continue to espouse—the programme is now understood exclusively as a means of downsizing the bloated army, i.e. as an exercise driven by an economic imperative. The new policy document, therefore, outlines the objectives of DDR in South Sudan in the following manner:

- The overall objective of the DDR policy and programme:
 - To support the transformation of SPLA/SSAF into a more professional, efficient and cost effective army
- Specific objectives of the DDR programme are ...:

- a) To reduce the size of the South Sudan Armed Forces (SSAF) and other uniformed services; and the associated military spending;
- b) To assist the ex-combatants to return to civilian life in their host communities;
- c) To help ex-combatants secure sustainable livelihoods through non-military means;
- d) To release all persons below 18 years of age from the armed forces and support their successful reintegration into civilian life.²

With a nod to the conventional norms of DDR programming, the document goes on to say that by achieving these objectives, the programme ‘shall also contribute to the prevention of further violent conflict in South Sudan as well as the creation of an enabling environment for human security and socio-economic development’.³

According to one DDR expert, this last addition was made at the behest of the UN agencies that are keen to include the objectives of development and human security, despite the tenuous link between these and the programme’s likely outcomes.

The core focus of the new programme is an intensive reinsertion component whereby participants will be sent to a transition camp for three months to receive training in literacy, numeracy, and civic education, as well as briefings by their peers (former SPLA soldiers) on their reintegration experiences. They will be further briefed on the reintegration opportunities that will be available to them once they leave the transition centres and will also have access to counselling, and medical screening and care. Participation in activities at the transition centres will be mandatory.

After three months, participants will be released to return to their communities, where they will be supported by reintegration activities such as vocational training programmes. Participation in these activities will be voluntary.

From the time of their demobilization and entry into the transition camps and for the following 12-month reintegration phase, programme participants will receive a full SPLA base salary. Seventy per cent of this is to be paid during the reintegration period, on a monthly basis, with a 30 per cent lump sum to be paid at the end to support the participants’ final transition to civilian life. After leaving the transition centre, participants may also be eligible for a separate ‘reintegration grant’ that can be used to finance tuition fees for training courses.

The programme planners are working with a provisional caseload of 150,000 participants over the course of the programme’s six-to-eight-year timescale. Seventy thousand of this number are to be drawn from security services other than the SPLA, i.e. police, wildlife, prisons, and the fire brigade. The exact size of the SPLA is still unclear and the reintegration of militia groups continues, as does unofficial recruitment in provincial areas. However, there is a commitment on the part of the force to reduce its size to 120,000 members by 2017.

Phase 2 is planned to begin in April 2012 with a pilot programme. Although programme planners are yet to reach a definitive agreement on the number of participants in the pilot phase, it is understood that three transitional centres will

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likely each accommodate 500 participants in three consecutive cycles, thereby achieving a total of 4,500 over a nine-month period. The three transitional centres are to be spread across South Sudan, with preliminary plans focusing on sites in Khorflus, (Jonglei) Nimule (Eastern Equatoria), and Mapel (Western Bahr al Ghazal).

The phase 2 target group is radically different to that of phase 1. Whereas the earlier programme focused on SNGs, the new programme will target active soldiers who are able bodied and motivated, particularly during the pilot phase. As one programme planner explained, it is essential that the pilot be perceived to be successful, thereby stimulating further success in subsequent phases. This desire to have a demonstrable success is also guiding the decision to include a low number of initial participants. Later, however, the programme will need to accelerate in order to process the total caseload of 150,000.

One aspect of the planning that has yet to be clarified is how exactly programme participants will be selected. In phase 1, it was clear to all involved that DDR was not viewed as the option of choice for SPLA soldiers. While they are receiving a salary that far exceeds those of their regional counterparts—which, indeed, was doubled at the beginning of 2011—the option to enter the DDR programme and attempt self-sufficiency is unattractive at best. In order to counter this, the policy paper states that ‘[e]x-combatants who qualify for DDR shall be compulsorily nominated for the programme. It is the patriotic duty of selected individuals to comply with the nomination’.⁴ When questioned at the August 2011 conference about how this delicate issue would be tackled, one senior SPLA general informed the audience that selection criteria will be drawn up by the SPLA and will not be shared with the international community. Notably, the policy document also states that ‘[t]he criteria for inclusion in the [DDR participants] list will be transparent and decided by the SPLA/SSAF in the light of its ongoing reform effort to professionalise the security forces and ensure that the forces reflect the composition of ethnic groups in South Sudan’.⁵ At present, international military advisors are assisting the SPLA to draw up these criteria.

Leadership

One of the most striking aspects of both the phase 1 and phase 2 programmes is the lack of clarity on which agency is leading the process. Although on paper and in principle the SSDDRC is the lead agency, in reality its capacity in terms of staff capability is very low. To bolster this capacity, UNDP has seconded a number of its experts to key positions within the commission. However, rather than enhancing the commission’s capacity, this has resulted in the unfortunate perception that that UNDP is leading the process. This, combined with the fact that, just as in phase 1, UNDP is likely to be the agency holding the programme’s purse strings, gives the impression that far from being a South Sudanese-owned programme, phase 2 will in fact be run by the international community.

Whereas the SPLA was almost absent in the planning of phase 1, it is now taking a much more active role in planning for phase 2. Initial discussions in early 2011 about the purpose and shape of the new programme were carried out behind closed doors between the SSDDRC and the SPLA, with just a handful of international military and



DDR advisors in attendance. The deliberate exclusion of the UN was to ensure that the programme met the requirements of the SPLA rather than being guided by 'best practice' that does not resonate with the South Sudanese context.

Although the SSDDRC in particular has expressed dissatisfaction at UNDP once again being the lead international partner, there are no other candidates with the capacity to undertake the task. The World Bank, which is the only other multilateral agency with significant experience in DDR programming and operations, is keen to limit its exposure in South Sudan, where it has been severely criticized for its handling of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

Although other countries, such as Rwanda, have undertaken the management of their own DDR programmes, the prospect of the South Sudanese doing likewise is currently unrealistic. After 22 years of civil war there is little capacity in the country to undertake such an enormous organizational challenge without international assistance.

Financing

During the CPA negotiations and after its signing, donors were eager to support DDR programmes throughout what were then North and South Sudan. Indeed, many claim that DDR was shoehorned into the security arrangements more at the behest of the international community than in response to Sudanese requirements. Due to the subsequent failings of phase 1, donors have since backed away from the programme in South Sudan and are approaching the next phase with a great degree of scepticism and caution. Although USD 10 million is currently available for the transition to phase 2, at present no donors have committed funding to the new programme.

Meanwhile, donor generosity in phase 1 has generated an impression that international funding of DDR is inevitable, raising SPLA expectations of international support. Programme planners report that while the SPLA is willing to pay the full salaries of programme participants throughout the reintegration phase, it hopes that the international community will pay for the cost of participants' subsistence in the transition sites. According to one expert involved in the programme planning, donors have balked at this suggestion: 'With a food crisis in the Horn of Africa and so many other competing demands, the donors are hardly keen to provide free food to a group of people who are receiving a very decent salary.'

Some programme planners have suggested that the new programme might only receive technical support from the international community rather than funding. However, donors are aware of political support for DDR programmes in their home countries. In private, they admit that if one country starts funding the programme, the political pressure on other donors will be considerably increased.

One method of persuading donors to offer support has always been to frame DDR as having development and human security benefits rather than as a tool through which the SPLA can downsize. An attempt at this is clear in the draft policy document, which claims that 'resources saved on the military salaries shall be re-channelled towards development of the country and improving the lives of its most vulnerable

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people'.⁶ This is a tough argument for the government to make, however, having doubled SPLA salaries in January 2011.

Indeed, some experts believe that claims of the programme's developmental and human security benefits need to be dropped altogether. One said: 'We need to call a spade a spade. The DDR programme is about security sector reform pure and simple.' He added that programme planners need to be honest about the objectives of DDR from the outset to avoid the same confusion over the programme's purpose that existed in phase 1, even if this renders the programme less attractive to donors.

The SPLA representatives who attended the August 2011 planning meeting were adamant that DDR would take place with or without the support of the international community. One senior general told the gathered audience: 'If the international community will not pay for the programme, we will sell our cows to pay for it.' So far, however, the GoSS has yet to commit any money—a signal that does not encourage the international community to offer support. Despite this, William Deng Deng, chair of the SSDDRC, announced on 20 September 2011 that a donor pledging conference is scheduled for November.

Sensitization

In a striking gesture of the SPLA's commitment to its transformation, the draft policy document states that the army will implement a special programme to professionalize its active forces with activities that will be paid for from a separate funding stream to that of the DDR programme. These activities will include literacy and numeracy training; carpentry, agriculture, and construction; special leave to enable soldiers to 'get a foretaste of civilian life'; and the strengthening of the payroll system so that it can be used as reliable basis for entry into the DDR programme.⁷ This last element of the special programme is crucial to ensuring that the individuals entering the programme are genuinely eligible.

The SPLA's commitment to sensitizing its members to DDR is crucial. Misinformation claiming lavish programme benefits was one of the key factors that led to dissatisfaction among programme participants in phase 1. This was an issue that UNDP and the SSDDRC constantly struggled with. In phase 2, it will be crucial that the army's information campaign is strong, clear and honest, even if this means retracting earlier promises.

Women and children

In phase 1 of the programme, strong provisions were made for women associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFG) and children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFG). Much of this was done in accordance with the UN's Integrated DDR Standards, a collection of best practice recommendations for DDR programming. However, throughout the programme it became clear that the WAAFG model did not work in the South Sudanese context for a number of reasons, predominantly because the SPLA does not distinguish between women associated with the army and female soldiers.

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For phase 2, women who fall under the UN definition of WAAFG will be dealt with under a separate support programme outside of DDR, but closely linked to it.⁸ This is a pragmatic decision that better reflects the situation in South Sudan.

CAAFG are still to be included in the programme under a separate sub-programme.⁹ This decision is somewhat baffling considering that the war ended over six years ago. Any person who qualifies would have to have been 12 years old when the CPA was signed and to have been overlooked for six years of DDR programming. The exceptions may be children in militia groups who have been integrated into the SPLA during the interim period. Many experts argue that a separate programme for this group would have been more appropriate.

Challenges

While the plan for phase 2 is a vast improvement on the earlier programme, numerous challenges threaten its success. These include the following:

- All stakeholders involved with the DDR programme recognize that its most important weakness is the fact that few soldiers actually *want* to enter it. With the weak South Sudanese economy and the prospects of employment outside government services so poor, even the redesigned programme offers an unattractive prospect. Furthermore, although the army publicly proclaims a desire to conduct DDR, behind closed doors there appears to be an ongoing lack of support for it at the highest levels. Advisors working closely with the army say that the programme is *never* on the agenda at high-level meetings.
- There is little support for the programme within other security forces. Although they are meant to constitute 47 per cent of the planned phase 2 caseload, for example, the police and wildlife services have shown little interest in the programme. This was made clear by their absence from the August 2011 planning workshop.
- Despite DDR being included in the transitional constitution and the South Sudan Development Plan (2011–2013), there is also a lack of public support for it. Some experts complain that ministry officials taking part in the planning process are too junior to improve this situation. So far, the GoSS has committed no financial resources to the programme.
- While the professed purpose of the programme is to downsize the army, there is no accompanying commitment to put a cap on recruitment. With the programme due to run for at least six to eight years, ongoing recruitment and the integration of rebel militia groups are inevitable, running the risk that DDR becomes a South Sudanese institution rather than a fixed-term programme.
- In South Sudan, one person's salary typically supports up to a dozen family members. Some experts feel that this element of a soldier's life has been overlooked in the new programme planning. The demobilization of one soldier will necessarily involve the relocation and reintegration of several other family members.

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- Ambiguity remains over the purpose of the programme. While the SPLA is clear that it wants to downsize, the international community is still pushing the message of development and human security.

Relationships among key partners

The main factor that has the greatest potential to damage the success of the programme is the continuing fractured relationship among key partners. During phase 1, few punches were pulled as programme partners publicly criticized one another with accusations of inefficiency and mismanagement. While several key individuals have moved on, bad blood and distrust remain. International advisors to the SPLA claim that the army has little confidence in the SSDDRC after experiencing six years of a programme that bore little relation to the army's needs. It has even been suggested that the SSDDRC sees DDR as a box-ticking exercise where success is measured by the numbers processed rather than the genuine success of reintegration.

The SSDDRC, in turn, has severe reservations about the involvement of UNDP as the lead international partner in the programme. Following serious allegations of financial mismanagement in the first phase of programming, the commission has repeatedly and publicly questioned UNDP's integrity and ability to run the programme, but feels it has little choice other than to continue the partnership. One international expert has even claimed that the provision of logistical support by the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was conditional on the inclusion of UNDP in the programme. Meanwhile, the relationship between UNDP and UNMISS on the subject of DDR is far from harmonious.

This lack of unity and competition among programme partners was one of the most damaging aspects of phase 1. It also has the potential to derail phase 2. DDR in South Sudan is a tremendous challenge and if it is to be successful, it is essential that the various partners develop a shared vision. Above all, they need to set aside past antagonisms in order to work together.

20 September 2011

¹ Different experts involved in the programme planning have given different dates. Both December 2011 and March 2012 have been mentioned as the finish date for phase 1.

² Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration, Version July 15, 2011*, pp. 6–7.

³ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 7.

⁴ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 7.

⁵ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 9.

⁶ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 5.

⁷ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 10.

⁸ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 15.

⁹ Republic of South Sudan, *Draft Policy Paper*, p. 15.