

DDR in South Sudan

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme in Sudan and South Sudan was born out of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. DDR activity began in earnest in 2009, but after the South's secession in July 2011 the programme split and took on new directions in each country. By July 2013, a second phase was starting with a pilot programme in South Sudan. But while the new institutional structure for DDR has been developed, the programme has not gained traction.

CPA-era DDR in South Sudan

The CPA's Permanent Ceasefire and Security Arrangements, signed on 31 December 2004, mandated a sustainable ceasefire and the disengagement of the armed forces in Sudan, followed by the implementation of a DDR programme. Only members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) were eligible for DDR. All other armed groups were outlawed and their members obliged to disband or integrate into the SPLA or SAF before they could be considered for DDR.

To facilitate the DDR process, the CPA called for a National DDR Coordination Council to oversee separate North and South Sudan DDR Commissions responsible for the design, implementation, and management of the DDR process in their respective regions. In the Three Areas (South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Abyei), Joint DDR Commissions composed of both Northern and Southern staff members were responsible for DDR programming. International support for the commissions was provided principally through an Integrated UN DDR Unit made up of the UN Mission in Sudan, the UN Development Programme, the UN Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, and the UN Population Fund.

An Interim DDR Programme (IDDRP), launched in late 2005, aimed to 'set up and build the capacity of DDR institutions and civil society, while initiating basic DDR processes for selected priority target groups'. These Special Needs Groups (SNGs), as they were subsequently labelled, included elderly and disabled combatants, and women and children associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFG and CAAFG).

In November 2007 a National Strategic Plan was adopted that laid out a two-phase approach to DDR in South Sudan, with SNG caseloads in phase I and the voluntary demobilization of active soldiers in phase II. A total of 180,000 participants were to participate in the DDR programme (90,000 each from the North and South). There were also provisions for subsequent phases after the CPA period. Due to numerous difficulties, however, including the challenge of building national institutions from scratch, the IDDRP failed to carry out any DDR operations apart from running a programme for CAAFG. It was eventually superseded by the Multi-Year DDR Programme (MYDDRP).

In June 2009 the MYDDRP began processing the first adult participants in the DDR programme. The programme used a list system to select participants, with army commanders from the SPLA and SAF drawing up lists of eligible programme participants. This was considered a more fair and economical system than cantonment, which had proved unsuccessful in DDR in other parts of the world.

In the end, the DDR programmes in North and South Sudan were largely unsuccessful. Each processed only a fraction of its intended caseload and the prevailing political and security situation during the CPA period meant that neither army had the will or intention to downsize its forces. At a total cost of USD 117 million, the programme had few, if any, human security benefits.

Post-CPA DDR planning and evolution

The South's secession in July 2011 ended both the CPA period and the legal imperative to undertake DDR. Since then, budget constraints and disagreement between the government and donors over the objectives and modalities of DDR in South Sudan have largely stalled the programme. In addition to the critiques of the CPA-era programme, the SPLA has grown in size due to continued recruitment and the absorption of rebel militia groups that has outpaced its very modest DDR caseload.

The institutional supports for phase II began with the creation in April 2011 of a National DDR Commission (NDDRC) to design sustainable government-led policies and programmes tailored to South Sudan. The National DDR Council, chaired by the president, came into effect in October 2012 and includes the NDDRC, cabinet members, technical line ministries, and senior officials from the SPLA and security forces, such as police, fire brigade, wildlife, and prisons services. The plans follow mistrust in phase I of UN agencies that rolled out DDR programmes in both countries that were supposed to cater for different needs but deferred largely to Khartoum for policy and management. Plans to demobilize 150,000 people over the next six to eight years in phase II, starting with a pilot of 4,500 across ten training centres (one for each state), were scaled down to a pilot of 500 people in one centre in Mapel, Western Bahr el Ghazal, due to financial and logistical constraints.

The programme now aims to demobilize 80,000 soldiers from the SPLA and 70,000 from the security forces over the next eight years. In a departure from the CPA-era programme, the participants will be able-bodied, while the disabled will remain in the army's Wounded Heroes programme, and other armed actors such as militia groups remain ineligible until they have been absorbed and passed through the SPLA. The first 500 will come from the four greater Bahr el Ghazal region.

Other changes from the earlier phase include a new reintegration curriculum designed by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in conjunction with the Ministry of General Education. It includes basic literacy, vocational training, and psychosocial care. Participants will receive a full year's salary throughout their training, with lesser payments during the course and a lump sum at the end. An improved database aims to better track beneficiaries once they are back home, where DDR projects will also be set up to benefit communities.

Partners and donors

The World Bank is supporting reintegration for up to one year, and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has helped to construct the Mapel center and started construction of two more in Jonglei state (Pariak) and Eastern Equatoria (Torit).

Elsewhere, the German Development Bank has given EUR 2 million for capacity building and reintegration through UNDP and the NDDRC. The World Bank is

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managing these funds for the pilot phase. UNDP may initiate a second testing phase on behalf of the NDDRC in a different location (e.g. Pariak). The World Food Programme has offered assistance with food provision; UNICEF is maintaining its role in helping child DDR along with UNMISS and SPLA protection units; and the African Union is advising on DDR policy. Within the framework of the CPA, Canada, UNMISS, and UNDP also provided direct assistance to support the establishment of 10 national DDRC offices and training centres in each of the state capitals for outreach activities.

Despite this engagement, donors have not made substantial commitments to a programme they view as overly ambitious given the shortfalls of phase I. UNMISS has indicated that the pilot programme's total budget is USD 1.5 million.

Future prospects

Originally expected to start in 2012, phase II has been postponed many times due to logistical problems, a lack of funds, and political wrangling over ownership. After a launch of the Mapel pilot in April 2013, the programme was expected to actually start with approximately 500 participants in June. Phase II's success largely depends on whether the pilot programme can produce results needed to restore donor confidence, and if there are teething problems, how quickly they can be rectified.

Whether South Sudan's authorities make good on political and financial pledges of support for the wider target of 150,000 people will also be a determining factor. It is widely agreed that the SPLM/A was not ready for phase I, especially coming out of almost five decades of war and while the South's future still hung in the balance. The government and security forces are now playing more active and leading roles, notably through the DDR Council, allowing quicker decision-making, and they clearly want to reduce the wage bill of a 'welfare army' at least 300,000 strong that absorbs funds needed for development, especially before elections in 2015. For them, 'rightsizing' the army to around 120,000 people is fundamentally an economic imperative.

At the same time, instability along the border with Sudan coupled with tensions arising from contentious issues such as oil, disputed territory, inter-communal fighting, and insurgencies within South Sudan have all cast doubt on the government's readiness and willingness to demobilize. Although able-bodied ex-combatants are now being put forward for DDR and the curriculum's endorsement by ministries should open more doors for state-contracted work, it is likely that only the weakest elements of the security forces will be retired this way.

Earlier failures by the main implementing partners to work together also overshadow the future of DDR in South Sudan. UNMISS—whose DDR staff number over 100—UNDP (currently represented by a sole advisor on the commission), and the NDDRC will be challenged to work together and deliver programmes on time and on budget. An army swelling from new recruits and militiamen taking the presidential amnesty offer may prove overwhelming. South Sudan teetered on the brink of economic collapse and almost returned to all out war with Sudan in April 2012 after halting oil exports that provided 98 percent of the government's revenue. Fresh doubts and tensions could easily prove a disincentive to DDR participants in a country where being armed provides some form of economic empowerment.

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