

DDR in Sudan

In response to a clear military and political crisis in the country, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process in Sudan has largely departed from traditional notions of the practice. The DDR context in the country is now characterized by the government's unprecedented mobilization of new (and some former) combatants aimed at quelling a fierce insurgency in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. The Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) rebels in these areas have also recruited to support their stated goal of toppling the National Congress Party (NCP) regime. As counter-insurgency operations continue, DDR has been relegated from its former place as a government priority. Politically and militarily, the current context in Sudan is not conducive to the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants.

Sudan's DDR partners, led by the Sudan DDR Commission (SDDRC), which resides within the office of the president, have responded to this challenge by shifting the content and focus of DDR programming. At the end of February 2013, during a workshop in Khartoum to review the direction of DDR, partners presented a 'community-based' approach to the broader objectives of DDR. This new approach does not propose the initiation of new caseloads for disarmament or demobilization but delivers community-relevant projects in areas with high concentrations of ex-combatants. Reintegration work with already disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants will continue. Until the extensive mobilization ends, and a durable peace deal can be implemented, the international community and the United Nations feel unable to support any new demobilization.

DDR, the CPA, and separation

Before the secession of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, a single DDR strategy—mandated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and formulated in 2007—directed DDR efforts in both the North and South. The National DDR Strategic Plan required the then-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and associated armed groups to draw down at equal rates, shrinking the two oversized armies and offering a proportionately comparable diminution in real capacity. The aim was to reduce the risk of a return to conflict and strengthen the CPA. At separation, however, the countries departed immediately from the original DDR strategy. The integral creation of trust and proportionality, which came with the linked DDR strategy, were left behind.

The original one-state process targeted 180,000 ex-combatants and associated members—90,000 from SAF and 90,000 from SPLA, including other armed groups (OAGs) that fought nominally in support of one side or the other. This 180,000 caseload was unverifiable and was spread out across the four years of the original programme (see Table 1 below) but did not include Darfur or the East, both of which were subject to separate peace processes. In the North, SAF would make up 27 per cent of cases, Northern SPLA soldiers (particularly from South Kordofan and Blue Nile) would comprise 33 per cent, and the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) would account for the other 40 per cent.

A holistic process that was nationally-owned and nationally-led was envisioned: ‘The DDR process shall take place within a comprehensive process of peace and national reconciliation, post conflict stabilization, peace building, conflict reduction and confidence building and most importantly reintegrating XCs [ex-combatants] into civil society while according priority to vulnerable and high risk groups like children, women, disabled and elderly’ (National DDR Strategic Plan, 2007). Eligibility was determined by a pre-registration list provided by SAF and the SPLA; pre-established eligibility criteria approved by the National DDR Coordination Council (NDDRC); and *bona fide* status during demobilization.¹ But verification of eligibility remained a problem throughout the programme.

Table 1 Planned 2009–12 DDR numbers combined for Sudan and South Sudan

Force	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
SAF/SPLA	51,560	40,000	46,730	41,710	180,000

Source: UNDP Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (January 2009–June 2012) Project Document, 25 June 2008. p. 9.

When South Sudan seceded, there was already institutional commitment to create separate strategies for each state. Until early 2013, the original 2007 strategic plan remained the guiding document for DDR in (North) Sudan. The SDDRC has signed a minimally revised 2013 strategic plan but other DDR partners have not yet seen the final version. In particular, this document pivots away from the CPA-centric 2007 version and highlights the new autonomy of DDR in each state. The funding structure for DDR already reflected the inherent distinctions between the two processes; this has enabled the clean division of the highly resourced programme.²

But political and military events quickly overtook post-secession DDR plans with the outbreak of fighting between the government and SPLA-North in South Kordofan in June 2011, and in Blue Nile in August. Because of the intense mobilization of regular and irregular combatants for these conflicts, DDR was suspended for four months while partners sought a new strategy that would be appropriate to the new context.

A new plan for Sudan: community-based approach

The conflicts in South Kordofan and Blue Nile have curtailed most key components of DDR in Sudan and forced a rethink of goals and modalities. Ongoing recruitment and mobilization have worked against DDR’s stated aims of disarming and demobilizing 90,000 soldiers from the ranks of SAF and both associated and opposition militias. Following the February 2013 workshop of DDR stakeholders in Khartoum, the NDDRC endorsed a national strategy that moved from traditional, individual disarmament to a community-based approach.

This approach offers a softer and more expansive means of implementing DDR by emphasizing community projects in areas with a high concentration of ex-combatants and where community violence persists.³ Youths are targeted, in particular, because they are seen to be most likely to return to the battlefield. The military and other stakeholders initially opposed this approach, saying it blurred the lines between community and military beneficiaries; and concentrates on consolidating gains

already made with ex-combatants who have completed the disarmament and demobilization phases.

Sudan's new DDR effort is executed by a range of government, UN, and NGO partners: the SDDRC, nine federal ministries, four state ministries in each state in which DDR is underway, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN children's agency UNICEF, UN WOMEN, the African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the Food and Agriculture Organization, and 43 national NGOs and community-based organizations. The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) provides direct technical assistance to the SDDRC.

Incomplete process, uneven results

Community-based reintegration activities are ongoing in South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Khartoum, North Kordofan, Sennar, and White Nile states. But results have been uneven in both qualitative and quantitative terms. While the political and military context is largely to blame, a set of 2010 evaluations by donors and UNDP painted an unflattering picture of the programme well before the return to conflict.⁴

Eastern Sudan provides the most positive picture: the full caseload of 3,951 combatants, divided into two phases (the first composed of 1,697 Eastern Front fighters, the second of 2,254 SAF and PDF), has completed the full DDR cycle. DDR in the East was executed under the terms of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement. The programme remains officially open there although no activities are being implemented; the UNDP closed operations following completion of the caseload.

DDR in Darfur has been governed by its specific peace agreements: the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) that initiated an abortive disarmament campaign, and the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), for which planning is underway. The government demobilized 4,027 combatants as part of the DPA, but after 315 of these fighters passed through a phase of reintegration, funds dried up and the programme stalled.⁵ Community-based preparation for DDR in Darfur has been undertaken but is unlikely given the funding problems and ongoing conflicts.

In South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and the 'Central Sector' of North Kordofan, Khartoum, Sennar, and White Nile states, 36,251 combatants (including 5,975 women) were demobilized before fighting started again in June 2011. To date, 24,688 have received vocational and small business training, with 23,765 now having completed reintegration. Figures produced by UNDP show the planned division of combatant profiles—27 per cent SAF, 33 per cent SPLA, and 40 per cent PDF—was largely reflected in practice: 26 per cent SAF, 25 per cent SPLA and 49 per cent PDF/OAGs.⁶

Table 2: Completed demobilization, training, and reintegration as of February 2013

State / Area	Demobilized		
	Total demobilized	Female total	Male total
Blue Nile	5,442	1,096	4,346
South Kordofan	24,309	4,080	20,229
Central Sector*	6,500	799	5,701
Grand total	36,251	5,975	30,276

State / Area	Training received		
	Total trained	Female total	Male total
Blue Nile	4,743	1,036	3,707
South Kordofan	15,498	2,573	12,925
Central Sector*	4,447	635	3,812
Grand total	24,688	4,244	20,444

State / Area	Reintegrated		
	Packages received	Female total	Male total
Blue Nile	4,641	1,006	3,635
South Kordofan	14,759	2,400	12,359
Central Sector*	4,365	631	3,734
Grand total	23,765	4,037	19,728

* Khartoum, North Kordofan, Sennar, and White Nile.
 Source: UNDP DDR, March 2013.

DDR in the face of armed conflict

While Sudan's DDR record may be patchy, the political and military context has been the single largest factor determining the process' success or failure. Institutional obstacles have also been at play with national government institutions sometimes disappearing from view; from the beginning of 2011 until June 2012, the nine ministers of the DDR Council did not meet. Extensive lobbying from the SDDRC⁷ was required to end this hiatus.

The clear policy of mobilization and militarization (see Table 3) raises serious questions about the viability of ongoing DDR in Sudan. This policy is diametrically opposed to the objectives of DDR as conceived in the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), and as envisioned by other international disarmament standards. National and international DDR stakeholders have shown programmatic acuity in adroitly but dramatically shifting the programme's focus to largely circumvent these obstacles and deliver tangible benefits to communities. But the country's open conflicts calls into question the appropriateness of a disarmament campaign.

As of June 2013, rebel offensives pose a greater threat to the Khartoum government than at any other time during its 24-year rule. During South Sudan’s mid-April 2012 incursion into the critical oil-producing area of Hejlij/Panthou, Sudan was quick to invoke sovereign justification as grounds for its mobilization of regular, PDF militia, and ‘mujahideen’ forces. Military recruitment of Khartoum youths has been documented, particularly in late-2012. This mobilization drive has spiked again as the SRF has begun to inch closer to strategically important areas.

Table 3: Government of Sudan mobilization and recruitment, 2012–13

Date	Mobilization
3 March 2012	President Omar al Bashir orders the construction of camps for the recruitment of thousands of PDF across the country. Unusually, the ensuing registration included women. ‘We direct all the states governors to open PDF camps and equip an entire brigade of these forces, to be named the Deterrence Forces, to confront all the agents and traitors.’ ⁸
Late March 2012	Bashir forms the Supreme Mobilization and Recruitment Committee in response to border conflict with South Sudan. ⁹
11 April 2012	In an extraordinary session involving both houses (National Assembly and Council of States), parliament declares a general mobilization to recruit people into its army and paramilitaries after the seizure of Hejlij/Panthou in South Kordofan. ¹⁰
8 May 2013	In response to more SRF attacks, the National Assembly suspends its sessions to enable lawmakers to head to their constituencies and lead mobilization campaigns in support of SAF. The speaker of the National Assembly directs MPs to mobilize youth to support SAF. ¹¹
20 May 2013	The Council of States also suspends its sessions to allow members to return to their home areas to drum up support for the Sudanese military as battles in the northern areas of South Kordofan threaten to swamp existing forces. ¹²

The government’s sudden and heavy-handed move in early June 2011 to fulfil mandated disarmament of former SPLA fighters belonging to the Joint Integrated Units (JIUs) in South Kordofan was the direct catalyst for the current conflict with the SPLA-N and ultimately the SRF. In the context of a disputed election and South Sudan’s impending secession just a month later, the unilateral and highly militarized attempt to disarm JIUs and the remaining Northern SPLA combatants illustrated the need for international involvement in disarmament in Sudan.

Even without a return to conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, disarmament would have been further complicated by the links between Northern former SPLA fighters and the SPLA in South Sudan: SPLM-N salaries were still being paid by Juba during a ‘transition’ period after independence, at least until September–October 2011 and possibly later. Testimony from Juba suggests that by end of 2011, some 15,000 Nuba soldiers may have continued to receive payment from South Sudan.¹³

In Darfur, the failure of the DPA, the quick return to insurgency, and the refusal of nearly all armed groups to sign up to the DDPD explain the general intransigence over DDR. Government and military rhetoric shows a clear preference for a military solution. But privately, significant segments of both communities acknowledge that political accommodation may be the only durable—or even possible—option.¹⁴

As well as jeopardizing the prospects for DDR, the return to conflict has undermined tangible DDR gains to date as ex-combatants are approached for remobilization. However, UNDP DDR's community surveys of ex-combatants, carried out in late-2011 and late-2012, offer a more positive story: in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, 72 per cent of those who completed reintegration had not rejoined. The surveys found that, on the whole, those who had found a sustainable livelihood and could provide schooling for their children chose not to return to the military or associated militias.¹⁵ As part of their demobilization, SAF ex-combatants pledged in writing to remain outside military activities; the individual agreements stipulate that in the case of remobilization, SAF must pay any salary that the ex-combatant might have gained had he or she remained enlisted in the interim.¹⁶ Many stakeholders felt that this contract offered a strong incentive to refrain from military activities.

Future prospects

The focus and modalities of DDR in Sudan have shifted significantly since the process was first conceived as a cornerstone of the CPA and a guarantor of peace between Khartoum and Juba. IDDRS-guided models of DDR have been replaced by community-based programming that initiates no new ex-combatant caseload but focuses on delivering tangible peace-oriented dividends to areas in which already disarmed and demobilized fighters now reside. Though not a traditional 'DDR programme', this shift will almost certainly increase the verifiability of caseloads; and could yield some human security gains,

While the minister of presidential affairs endorsed the national strategy for DDR and community security in early 2013,¹⁷ this official document does not acknowledge the acute challenges presented by the ongoing conflict in Darfur and the Two Areas. Donors and practitioners continue to express concerns over this omission.

In spite of the conflicts, there is real reluctance within the government and among UN partners and some donors to pause or mothball the process; international partners consider DDR to be a key working engagement with an otherwise insular government. Several donor governments have blanket mandates to support DDR processes regardless of their form. Part of the rationale for continuation is that, once paused, the process will be difficult to start again. This is largely a result of the international community's experience of the tight operating environment for the UN and NGOs in Sudan.

Given ongoing international and national support for the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), prospects for forward movement on more traditional notions of DDR are best in Darfur. The DDPD is constructed largely around incentivizing armed groups to participate in a DDR process through delivery of significant donor-funded reconstruction of the region. A full DDR programme and set of community-based activities are slated to roll out within the DDPD framework in 2013. The Darfur DDR Preparatory Support Project—to build national capacity at the state level and carry out public information campaigns on DDR and community-based interventions—has already been delivered and is laying the groundwork for process.¹⁸ Typically, however, the all-important elements of funding and peace remain elusive.

Additional challenges persist. Verification of Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM)¹⁹ combatants is a sticking point because of disagreement over numbers. Illustrating the attractiveness of potential donor contributions to Darfur's recovery, LJM agreed to verification by joint monitors shortly after the 7–8 April 2013 donor conference in Doha, at which DDR plans for the region were unveiled. However, the 12 May death of the leader of Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)-Bashar, the faction of JEM that signed on to the DDPD in April, is a blow to the agreement. Mainstream JEM, active in the SRF, has rejected the DDPD. Although none of Darfur's most powerful rebel groups—all now fighting under the SRF umbrella—have shown interest in signing on to the peace deal, other smaller factions have explored negotiations with the government. Successful implementation of DDR has broader significance in Darfur: it shows all factions that there are alternatives to conflict and that the DDPD is viable.

Government commitment and mandate continuation

The SDDRC's mandate is still officially linked to the ongoing CPA process and the government still considers DDR a priority, at least rhetorically.²⁰ The mandate was originally to end in December 2013. However, during the February workshop, the government said it would be extended to 2015.²¹ Despite this extension, the current approach includes no immediate plans for a new caseload; stakeholders including the SDDRC agreed at the February workshop on the need for a durable peace agreement before initiating a fresh process of DDR.²²

Funding for DDR in Sudan comes from Japan, Norway, Spain, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Existing support covers the current caseload—those who have completed the disarmament and demobilization phase and the community-based approach through the end of 2013. Further demobilization would require more funds, however, and the United Kingdom,²³ Norway, and Japan have indicated their interest—should a durable and popular peace deal be struck with SRF. The SDDRC's February 2013 strategic document contains ambitious caseload targets for 2013 and 2014. Table 4 provides the current balance sheet on DDR cases in Sudan. The CPA caseload total of 53,749 represents the remains of the agreement's original 90,000 target, however the new realities of the ongoing conflict mean these numbers are certain to require adjustment.

Table 4: Planned 2013–14 DDR numbers by peace agreement

Year	AGREEMENTS			Total
	CPA	Darfur agreements	East agreement	
2013	23,749	15,000	1,570	40,319
2014	30,000	15,974	2,000	47,974
Total	53,749	30,974	3,570	88,293

Source: 2013 DDR Strategic Document, SDDRC.

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NOTES

- ¹ UNDP Sudan (United Nations Development Programme Sudan). 2008. *Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (January 2009–June 2012) Project Document*. 25 June, p. 9.
- ² Interview with DDR stakeholder, Khartoum, 13 May 2013.
- ³ More broadly, the community-based approach targets: (1) former male and female ex-combatants and associated groups; (2) war affected individuals; and (3) individuals with weapons and conflict carrying capacities (e.g. youths). The approach uses economic and social stabilization measures, including some components on basic infrastructure.
- ⁴ Interviews with DDR stakeholders, May 2013. A 2012 UNDP Sudan ‘final report’ on DDR in Sudan reflects many of the criticisms raised in 2010. See Abhijit Bhattacharjee and Hassan Ali Gadkarim, *Evaluation of Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programme*, UNDP Sudan, November 2012.
- ⁵ Interview with DDR stakeholder, Khartoum, 14 May 2013.
- ⁶ UNDP DREAM (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Arms Management) statistics, produced 7 June 2013.
- ⁷ The SDDRC sits under the presidency, under the authority of the minister of presidential affairs, General Bakri Salih. Donors and UN partners say the SDDRC has been a good partner in terms of facilitating government support for DDR and encouraging the government to endorse and support the new approach.
- ⁸ ‘Sudan’s Bashir orders mobilisation of paramilitary forces, slams US and its special envoy,’ *Sudan Tribune*, 3 March 2012.
- ⁹ ‘Sudan VP Taha urges citizens to confront South Sudan’s "aggression",’ *Sudan Tribune*, 12 April 2012.
- ¹⁰ Sudan declares general mobilisation after Heglig clash, *Sudan Tribune*, 11 April 2012.
- ¹¹ Sudan’s parliament suspends activities to push for military mobilization, *Sudan Tribune*, 8 May 2013.
- ¹² Sudan’s council of states suspends sessions to push for military mobilization, *Sudan Tribune*, 20 May 2013.
- ¹³ Gramizzi, Claude and Jerome Tubiana. 2013. *New War, Old Enemies: Conflict Dynamics in South Kordofan*. HSBA Working Paper No. 29. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, p. 48.
- ¹⁴ Confidential communication with diplomatic source close to SAF, Khartoum, 19 May 2013.
- ¹⁵ Interview with DDR stakeholders, Khartoum, 30 May 2013.
- ¹⁶ Interview with DDR stakeholder, Khartoum, 30 May 2013.
- ¹⁷ UNDP March 2013 DDR Updates document.
- ¹⁸ UNDP March 2013 DDR Updates document.
- ¹⁹ The LJM was the only group to sign up originally to the DDPD and is broadly seen as having been hastily cobbled together by international and domestic DDPD stakeholders to model the potential benefits of the peace agreement. At the same time, the LJM has achieved some power in Darfur and its leader Tijani Sese is now head of the Darfur Regional Authority.
- ²⁰ Interview with BICC technical adviser to SDDRC, 22 May 2013.
- ²¹ One DDR official in Khartoum said the government saw DDR as a means of keeping tabs on an increasingly messy recruitment process as well as the haphazard distribution and proliferation of both militias and weapons. Interview with DDR official, Khartoum, May 2013.
- ²² Interview with DDR stakeholder, Khartoum, 13 May 2013.