

## Persistent threats

### Widespread human insecurity in Lakes State, South Sudan, since the CPA

#### Moving forward, assessing damage

Important gains have been made in South Sudan since the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Sudanese government signed the landmark Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in early January 2005.<sup>1</sup> With its provisions for a permanent internationally monitored ceasefire, power sharing and equitable access to oil wealth, the separation of religion and state, autonomy during the interim period, and a separate army for the south, the CPA responded to a number of key southern grievances. Expectations for peace dividends among southerners have also remained high. While capacity challenges persist, the transformation of the SPLM/A into a functioning government is widely expected to attract direct foreign investment and development assistance, improve access to basic services, and bolster physical security on the ground.

#### Geographic focus

The household survey carried out in Lakes State (known locally as Buheytrat State) is the first of at least three separate HSBA surveys planned across Sudan. Geographically, the Lakes State survey focused on six accessible counties: Rumbek East and Centre, Yirol East and West, Cueibet, and Wulu (see Map). Ethnically, more than 70 per cent of the estimated 880,000 inhabitants of the state are believed to be Dinka, with the remainder consisting mainly of Jur Bel and Gok.<sup>2</sup> Like much of the south, most Lakes communities are composed of discrete clusters of extended families living together in compounds. Agro-pastoralism is the primary means of livelihood and socio-economic organization.

Lakes State was also selected because it was considered to be relatively safe in comparison to other areas of the south. It was an SPLM/A stronghold during the civil war and experienced relatively few incursions by the Government of Sudan over the past decade. Nevertheless, like many other states, Lakes State has experienced an escalation in local conflicts tied to cattle-rustling and access to scarce natural resources, especially during the dry seasons, when competition for water and grazing is at its peak.

These expectations are especially important as South Sudan was one of the most dangerous places to be a civilian in the 20th century. In stark contrast to the North, which recently experienced one of the fastest GDP growth rates in Africa, almost four decades of conflict (1956–72 and 1983–2005) have exacted a devastating toll on the lives of southerners.

Between 1983 and 2002, more than two million people are estimated to have died—the overwhelming majority (97 per cent) from disease and malnutrition.<sup>3</sup> Today, South Sudan is one of the most underdeveloped regions in the world.<sup>4</sup> The virtual absence of a health infrastructure—and thus of public health services—has made the surveillance of mortality and morbidity rates virtually impossible.<sup>5</sup>

### Residents of Lakes State admit to being well armed.

One of the more insidious contributors to persistent insecurity in South Sudan is the widespread presence of unregulated small arms and light weapons.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding an important emphasis on community security, the southern disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme—which is supported by the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS)—is still nascent and focuses primarily on ex-combatants and their dependents.<sup>7</sup> SPLM attempts to forcibly disarm civilians this year have resulted in fighting and increased insecurity.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time reliable and verifiable information on the acquisition, possession, and misuse of small arms is virtually non-existent. Without reliable data, an effective, accountable, and evidence-based approach to improving human security will not be realized. Responding to these challenges, growing numbers of practitioners and researchers are starting to generate data from qualitative and quantitative surveys and focus groups in a bid to capture perceptions of safety and the real incidence of armed violence.

### Reconsidering insecurity in the South: the Lakes State survey

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a multi-disciplinary research project designed to expand understanding and awareness on safety and secu-

## Survey demographics

- 85 per cent of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 59 and the average age of respondents was 35 years;
- 53 per cent of respondents were female;
- 73 per cent of respondents identified themselves as Dinka, with most others identifying themselves as Jur Bel (10 per cent) and Gok (8 per cent);
- 54 per cent of respondents lived in urban areas or small towns;
- 35 per cent of respondents lived in rural areas with high population concentrations located near towns; and
- 11 per cent of respondents lived in highly dispersed rural communities.

riety throughout Sudan. It is coordinated by the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey with financial support from the Department of Foreign Affairs Canada. Between April and May 2006, the HSBA survey team, in partnership with Pact Kenya, conducted a large-scale household survey to assess levels of real and perceived insecurity across Lakes State since the signing of the CPA.

Preliminary findings reveal that despite the declared end of hostilities, security remains elusive for many southerners. The survey reveals that residents of Lakes State appear to be well armed, and the widespread availability of automatic and light weapons, combined with weak modern and customary security arrangements and a climate of impunity, has contributed to the persistence of unusually high rates of criminality and armed violence.

This *Sudan Issue Brief* elaborates on the methodology and profile of respondents before reviewing findings in more detail.

## Survey methodology

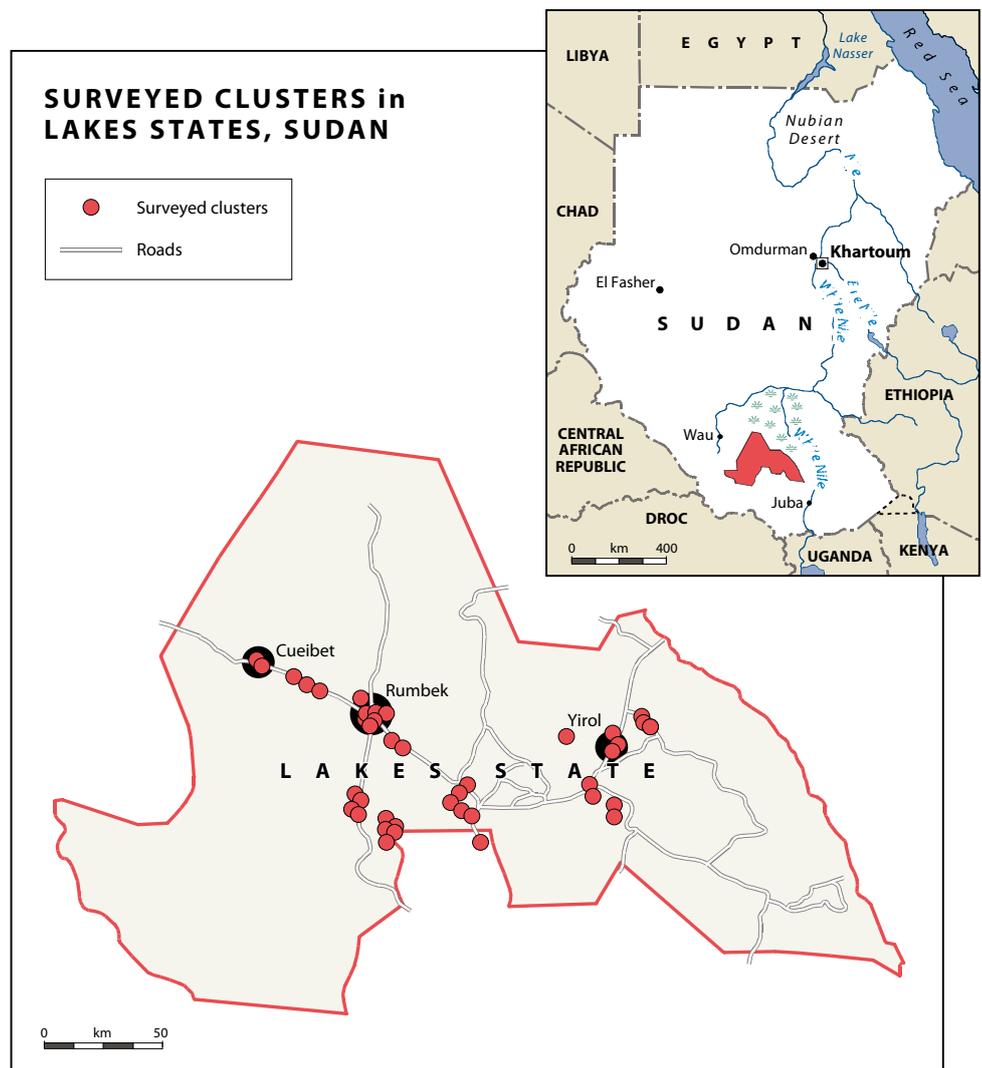
The HSBA is the first victimization survey ever undertaken in South Sudan. Beginning in April 2006, 12 two-person teams were locally recruited and trained. In order to enhance response rates, each team was composed of a local man and woman, each of whom was asked to administer 60 interviews in a pre-selected area.

In the absence of national or regional census data to construct a representative sample, a semi-representative selection of rural, semi-urban, and urban areas in six of the eight counties of the state was established. The average duration of each interview was slightly more than 30 minutes. More than 670 surveys were administered out of the initial target of 740.

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## Preliminary findings

**Lakes State residents are heavily armed.** More than one-third (35 per cent) of respondents admitted that they or someone in their compound possessed a firearm. Among respondents reporting weapons ownership, the most commonly held arms included AK-47 automatic assault rifles (31 per cent), revolvers and pistols (26 per cent), shotguns (10 per cent), air guns (4 per cent), and rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs) (1 per cent). Given that small arms possession and misuse remains prevalent in Lakes—a comparatively peace-



Map by MAPgrafix

ful and controlled region of Sudan—it is highly likely that the situation is even more problematic in other areas of the south. More positively, small arms and light weapons carrying outside family compounds reportedly *decreased* from 30 per cent before the signing of the CPA in 2005 to approximately 15 per cent thereafter.

**Almost two-thirds of respondents believe that communities are over-armed.** Sixty-three per cent believe that there are too many guns in the community, with the primary group considered over-armed being civilians (31 per cent), followed by youth (19 per cent), criminals (16 per cent), and ex-combatants (13 per cent).

These findings have important implications for the future of ongoing and prospective disarmament and DDR programmes in South Sudan and elsewhere. Indeed, civilians, youth, criminals, and private security companies—in addition to ex-combatants—were all identified as being important prospective target groups of future disarmament programmes.

**Contrary to expectations, fewer than half of respondents feel that their personal security has improved since the signing of the CPA.** Respondents were asked twice whether security had improved since the signing of the CPA.

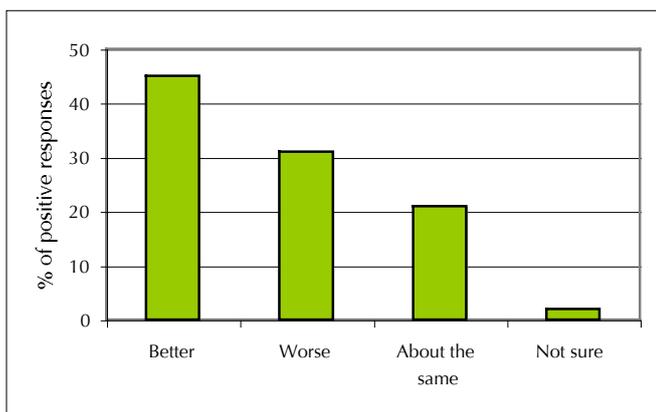
In both cases, fewer than half reported that security had improved, with about one-third claiming that security had in fact deteriorated since early 2005 (see Figure 1). Well under half of respondents claimed to feel safe walking alone



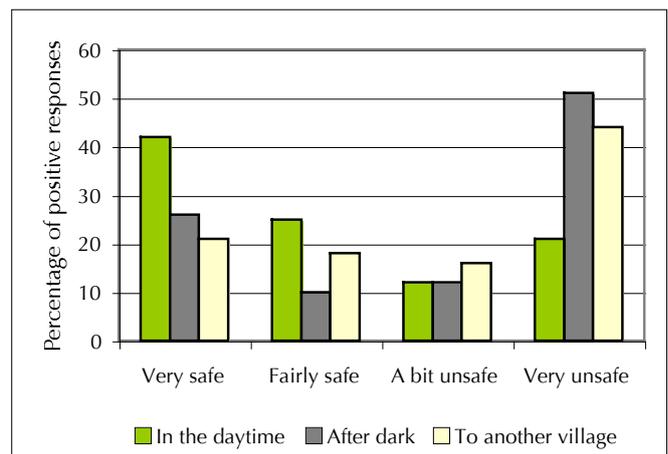
An 11-year-old boy patrols his village with a firearm. © Richard Garfield

at night or to another village (see Figure 2). Even more dramatically, one-third reported feeling unsafe walking alone *during the day*.

**Figure 1: Has security improved since the signing of the CPA?**



**Figure 2: How safe do you feel walking alone?**





A member of the local militia stores an AK-47 in his bicycle frame.  
© Richard Garfield

**Violent insecurity is pervasive—with robbery and fights most commonly reported.** More than half of all households reported having been robbed and involved in a physical fight with someone from outside their compound since the signing of the CPA (see Figure 3). More than one in ten households reportedly experienced a sexual assault during the same period—one-third of which were committed with a firearm.<sup>9</sup> Almost half of all respondents claimed that armed robbery was the most common violent crime since the CPA. In fact, across all settings, an average household has experienced at least one robbery, nearly two fights, and close to one armed attack since the signing of the CPA (see Figure 4).

The majority of both victims and perpetrators for all events were reportedly men in their 20s. Robberies, armed attacks, and intentional fatal injuries were most commonly attributed to conflicts over livestock. Violent deaths were also frequently linked to ‘fights with enemies’, usually over cattle, grazing land, and water sources. *Within* compounds, such fights were most commonly associated with ‘disobedience’ or, more likely, domestic and intimate partner violence.

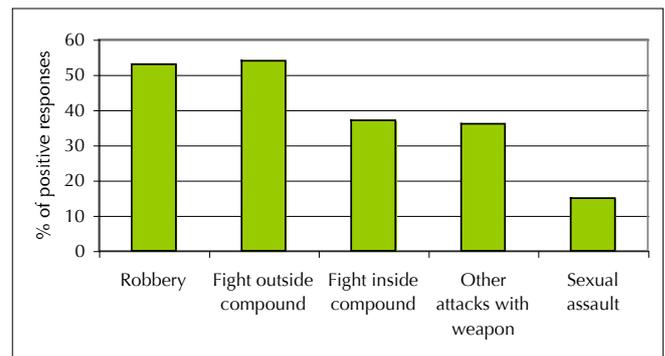
**Small arms are the predominant determinant of violent events.** Survey respondents reported that firearms (rifles and handguns) were the most frequently used weapons in the majority of violent events, whether robberies (70 per cent), armed attacks (63 per cent), or deaths arising from injuries or accidents (66 per cent) (see Figure 5). By way of comparison, respondents indicated that RPGs and automatic weapons were used in 13 per cent of injuries or accidental deaths. Far fewer automatic weapons or RPGs were reportedly used in fights either within or outside the compound, where rifles, handguns, and blunt objects such as sticks were more heavily represented.

**Only about one-quarter of those who died from violent attacks received medical treatment.** Because of the great distances that must be travelled to reach medical

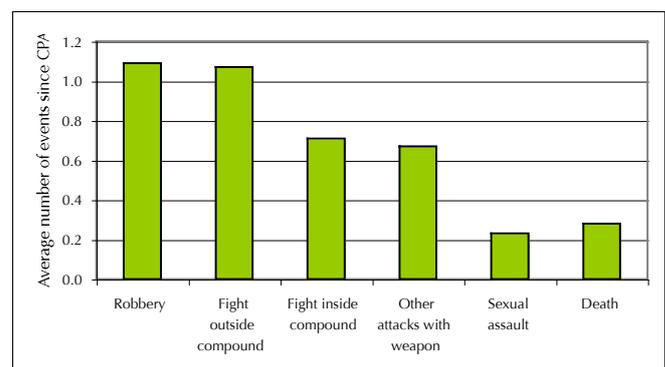
facilities—often five to six hours—most (74 per cent) people who died from injuries were not able to seek medical treatment after being wounded. Among those mortally wounded who were able to obtain treatment, 14 per cent were attended to by a relative and another 14 per cent by a traditional healer. Firearm injuries were more likely to bring about a hospital visit, while non-firearm injuries were more likely to result in a visit to a clinic or treatment at home.

**Disarmament and gun control, coupled with security sector reform (SSR) and police training, are viewed by Lakes State residents as high priorities.** Almost three quarters of respondents claimed that reducing the number of firearms and related arms would make people safer. In fact, more than one-fifth of respondents contended that firearms were South Sudan’s *most pressing concern*—outranking even access to education (20 per cent), poor health facilities (7 per cent), and unemployment (4 per cent) as the region’s most urgent priorities. Almost two-thirds of respondents reported that improvements to the security sector (police and military) were a high priority. More than half focused on the need for more effective police, while 20 per cent identified improving the army as a priority.

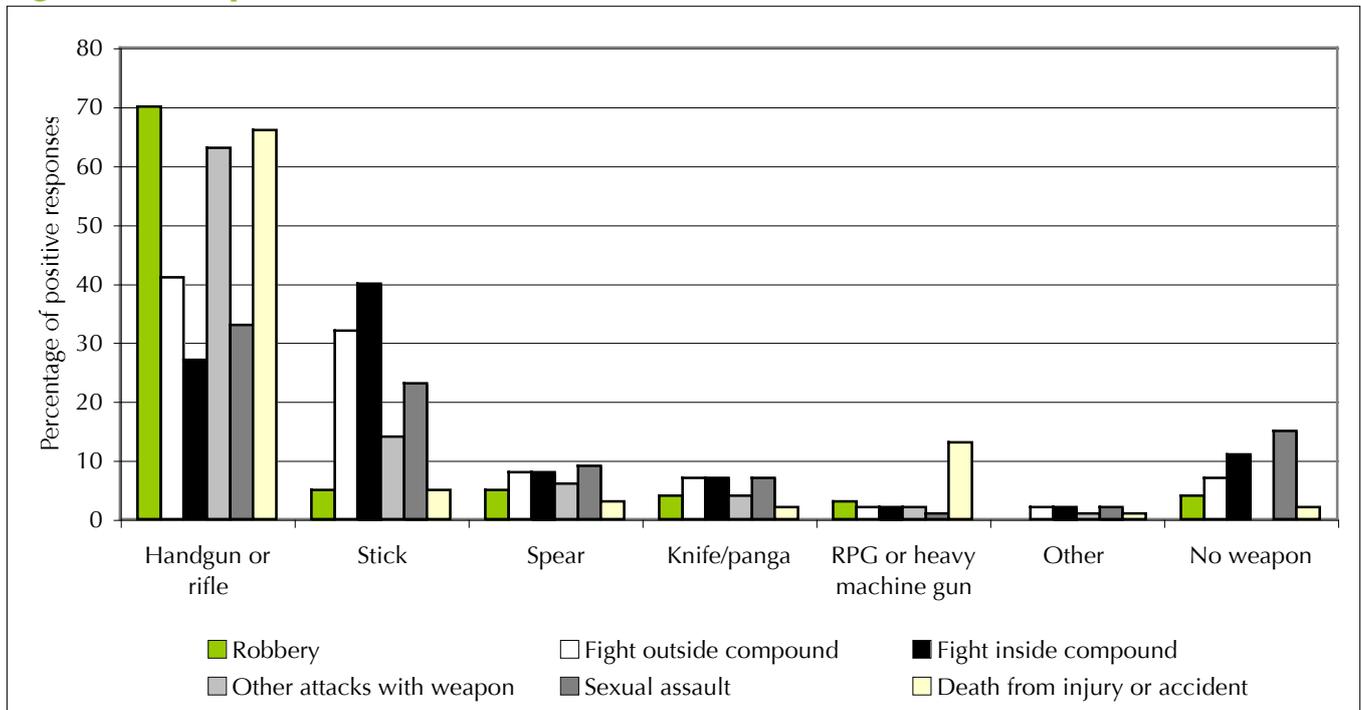
**Figure 3: Households reporting violent incidents**



**Figure 4: Average number of events reported in affected households<sup>10</sup>**



**Figure 5: Weapons used in violent incidents**



## Policy implications

While the HSBA household survey in Lakes State is not representative of the entire South Sudan region, it does provide important policy insights for national, multilateral, and bilateral actors. Though vastly different from the levels of insecurity faced in other areas of Sudan such as Darfur, which receive more media attention, the survey reveals the very real and persistent security threats facing southern Sudanese citizens on a daily basis.

Contrary to expectations, it finds that insecurity has actually increased for many in the post-CPA period, emphasizing the importance of renewed attention to the south. The HSBA also reveals a range of measurable benchmarks and indicators against which to assess changes in the security situation over the short to medium term. Ultimately, the true value of DDR and disarmament programmes will be revealed by the extent to which they redress real and perceived insecurity.

- 1 Long-term voluntary and reciprocal disarmament programmes—as opposed to discrete forcible arms collection activities—are essential to addressing insecurity.** Such disarmament efforts should focus on automatic weapons, RPGs, and ammunition and adopt appropriate selection criteria on a state-by-state basis.
- 2 Many residents of Lakes State appear receptive to programmes that advance voluntary civilian disarmament.** A positive proxy indicator of residents' willingness to reduce their reliance on firearms is the notable reduction in open weapons carrying since the adoption of the CPA. Disarmament efforts must capitalize on this good will and ensure well-publicized and transparent activities. It should be recalled that a significant number of residents still retain their weap-

**An average household has experienced at least 1 robbery, nearly 2 fights, and close to 1 armed attack since the signing of the CPA.**

ons for (personal) 'safety' in the absence of a strong, credible, and legitimate public security presence or reciprocal disarmament in neighbouring communities.

- 3 Any sustainable disarmament programme must be accompanied by meaningful and tangible improvements in the security sector.** Residents of Lakes State repeatedly identified more effective police and army as crucial to improving their own personal and familial sense of security, the absence of which currently feeds their perceived need to arm themselves. Civilian disarmament and DDR interventions must be undertaken in parallel with credible police training and reform programmes, possibly with a community focus.
- 4 Competition for scarce resources—especially livestock, grazing land, and water sources—remains a major source of insecurity in the region and requires particular policy and programmatic attention.** Any prospective disarmament and DDR interventions must recognize and respond to the seasonal nature of armed violence, which peaks during the dry season. Moreover, such programmes must be accompanied by locally mediated conflict prevention and resolution strategies with due attention to the demand 'triggers' for small arms and existing—if dormant—local security arrangements.

## Notes

*This Sudan Issue Brief elaborates research coordinated by Richard Garfield, DrPH, Henrik H. Bendixen Clinical Professor of International Nursing at Columbia University's School of Nursing. He is primarily responsible for its content. Additional collaborators include Bruno Chatenoux, Claire McEvoy, Claire Metelits, and Robert Muggah. Emile LeBrun provided editorial support; Tania Inowlocki copy-edited the text and laid it out.*

- 1 The CPA consists of several separate agreements drawn up through 31 December 2004 and signed in a formal ceremony on 9 January 2005. The agreements include: the Machakos protocol (20 July 2002); the agreement on security arrangements (25 September 2003); the agreement on wealth sharing (7 January 2004); the protocol on power sharing (26 May 2004); the protocol on the resolution of conflict in Southern Kordofan/Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile States (26 May 2004); the protocol on the resolution of the conflict in Abyei area (26 May 2004); the implementation modalities of the protocol on power sharing (31 December 2004); and the permanent ceasefire and security arrangements implementation modalities (31 December 2004).
- 2 The best available population and demographic information can be found on <<http://www.unsudanig.org>>.
- 3 See, for example, Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, 2005, 'Monitoring trends in global combat: A new dataset of battle deaths' in *European Journal of Population*, vol. 21, no. 2–3, pp. 145–66.
- 4 The maternal mortality rate is 1,700 per 100,000 live births, more than three times higher than in the north of the country. Of the 1.4 million school-age children in the south, fewer than 400,000 (29 per cent) were enrolled in school by the end of 2003—and only 2 per cent had completed primary school. Among girls, the rate falls to fewer than 1 per cent. See, for example, JAM (Joint Assessment Mission Sudan), 2005, *Cluster reports*, vol. III, available from <<http://www.unsudanig.org>>; and JAM, 2005, *Framework for sustained peace, development and poverty eradication*, vol. I, available from <<http://www.unsudanig.org>>.
- 5 Sudan's GDP growth rate was 2 per cent during the 1970s and 1980s. Following discovery of oil, according to the World Bank, it has risen to 6 per cent.
- 6 The Small Arms Survey generally follows the definition of 'small arms and light weapons' used in the UN *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms* (<<http://www.un.org/Depts/ddar/Firstcom/SGreport52/a52298.html>>).
- 7 See, for example, Robert Muggah, 2006, 'Reflections on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in Sudan', Humanitarian Practice Network, <<http://www.odihpn.org.uk/report.asp?ID=2795>>.
- 8 See, for example, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 2006, 'Sudan: Fragile disarmament in the south' August 3, <[http://www.irinnews.org/S\\_report.asp?ReportID=54959&SelectRegion=East\\_Africa](http://www.irinnews.org/S_report.asp?ReportID=54959&SelectRegion=East_Africa)>.
- 9 Sexual assaults and rape are likely underreported, particularly when male surveyors question female respondents or other community members being present during the interview.
- 10 In contrast to the other questions, which asked about events since the CPA (14 or 15 months prior), the question about killings of a family member asked for a five-year recall period and thus cannot be used to identify trends since the CPA. The rate of ten per cent given here is a mathematical adjustment of the five-year period data to represent an equivalent time period of 15 months.

## The HSBA project

### Project summary

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a two-year research programme (2005–07) administered by the Small Arms Survey, an independent research project of the Graduate Institute of International Studies.

It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNMIS, the UN Development Programme, and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the HSBA project works to support DDR, SSR, and arms control interventions to promote security.

The Assessment is being carried out by a multidisciplinary team of regional, security, and public health specialists. It will review the spatial distribution of armed violence throughout Sudan and offer policy-relevant advice to redress insecurity.

*Sudan Issue Briefs* are designed to provide periodic snapshots of baseline data. Future editions will focus on armed groups, the trade and transfer of small arms

into and out of Sudan, local security arrangements, and victimization rates. The project will also generate a series of timely and user-friendly reports and working papers in English and Arabic, which will appear on [www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).

The HSBA project is supported by Foreign Affairs Canada.

### Contact details

To find out more details or provide feedback, contact Claire McEvoy, the HSBA project coordinator, at [mcevoy@hei.unige.ch](mailto:mcevoy@hei.unige.ch).



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