

## Failures and opportunities

### Rethinking DDR in South Sudan

The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants in Sudan, conceived as a milestone in the peace process between the North and the South, was expected to be the largest such programme ever implemented. But by January 2011, six years after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) required the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan Armed Forces to conduct DDR of their wartime forces, less than 13 per cent of the SPLA's targeted adult caseload had entered the process.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of agreement on objectives among stakeholders, the programme has suffered from widespread mismanagement and inefficiency;<sup>2</sup> moreover, it has failed to achieve the benefits in human security and social stabilization envisioned by its planners.

With the CPA's mandate for DDR set to expire in July 2011, the programme has produced some unexpected benefits. The programme designers' early, strong emphasis on ensuring the inclusion of women has allowed thousands of vulnerable female former SPLA members to obtain much-needed livelihood training. At the same time, however, many SPLA commanders have used the programme to set non-essential members out to pasture, or as a benefits programme for former SPLA members, preferring to retain and pay salaries to valued soldiers rather than force them through the programme.

This *Issue Brief* examines the conflicting conceptions of DDR among its key stakeholders and the consequences of the programme's serious limitations and modest successes. It also looks

ahead to the prospects for DDR in an independent South Sudan. It finds that:

- DDR participants routinely fail to meet the programme's eligibility criteria because they joined the SPLA too late (after 2005) or left the army before entering the programme.
- The SPLA remains significantly disengaged from the ongoing DDR programme, primarily because it regards DDR benefits as insufficient compensation for its ex-combatants and has never felt ownership of the civilian-led process.
- The DDR programme has had no discernible impact on security in South Sudan.
- Although it publicly agreed to downsize the army through DDR, the SPLA leadership did not intend to undertake the necessary steps prior to 2011.
- The SPLA's target DDR caseload of 90,000 ex-combatants was determined through a bargaining process that bore little relation to the genuine capacity or needs of the SPLA.
- As a result of an early focus on female combatants, women SPLA members have enjoyed significant livelihood training benefits from the DDR programme.
- Despite concerns that many global DDR 'best practices' may be inapplicable to the Sudanese context, the programme continues to prioritize lessons from other DDR programmes rather than the specific context of South Sudan.
- Plans under discussion for reconfiguring DDR in Sudan will only succeed if the partners have a shared understanding of its purpose.

### Early disagreements

By signing the CPA, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Government of Sudan agreed to proportional downsizing of their forces and DDR programming to be implemented with the assistance of the international community.<sup>3</sup> DDR had not been a focus of the primary SPLA negotiators, however. The SPLA was more concerned with the ceasefire and security arrangements and with maintaining a force large enough to counter possible future Northern aggression.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the mediation's technical teams pushed for the inclusion of DDR, in line with previous post-conflict security discussions of the peace talks sponsored by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development since 2002.<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the parties did not reach agreement on the likely size of the DDR caseloads during the CPA discussions.<sup>6</sup> Technical experts viewed DDR as inherently important; the details could be worked out later.<sup>7</sup> The expectation, enshrined in the CPA but perhaps reflecting the experts' hopes more than the parties', was that DDR would contribute to human security and social stabilization.<sup>8</sup>

The SPLA and some international supporters agreed early on to immediately canton SPLA ex-combatants and begin psycho-social rehabilitation and job training assistance, eschewing cash demobilization handouts. But donors reportedly balked at the estimated USD 20 million per month price tag.<sup>9</sup> They were also opposed to cantonment based on previous experience.<sup>10</sup> By 2005, cantonment in other African

DDR programmes had become associated with security risks, unfairness to female combatants, and other poor outcomes.<sup>11</sup> Experts wanted to avoid these pitfalls in Sudan.<sup>12</sup>

Establishing criteria for participation in DDR quickly presented particular challenges. The 21-year civil war had involved the entire Southern population in one way or another, and distinctions between civilians and combatant were often difficult to establish.<sup>13</sup> With a potentially enormous caseload, eligibility criteria would ultimately be shaped by the availability of donor funding. But before this could be worked out, the relative sizes of the two armies had to be established.

Without an official register and claiming it would have to integrate unknown numbers from other armed groups (OAGs), the SPLA initially declared up to 300,000 members.<sup>14</sup> The international community rejected this figure as inflated and estimated the SPLA's total troop strength at 35,000–40,000.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, the SPLA settled on 90,000, which UNDP accepted, assuming that a later registration process would settle the question decisively.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, DDR planners adopted the unlikely 90,000 figure as their demobilization target.

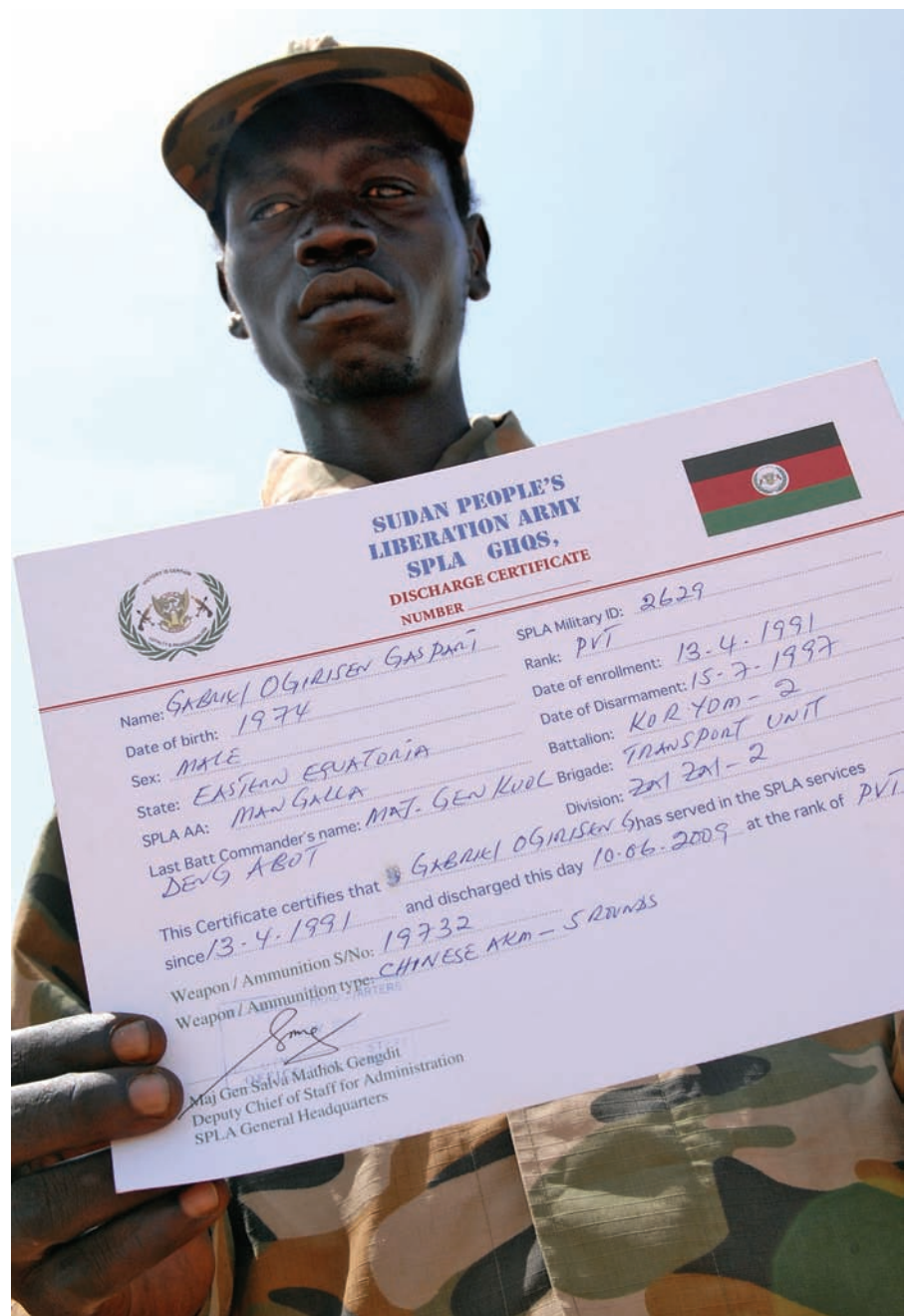
## A slow start

While the CPA stipulated that the process was to be 'nationally led', the Southern DDR institutions had to be created from scratch. Building them in a country devastated by war and with little infrastructure was a monumental task and took considerable time.

The challenges of 'reintegration' into communities with little or no economic life were also immediately apparent to planners. In recognition that full-scale DDR was probably some time away, the international community launched an Interim DDR Programme (IDDRP) in 2006 to operationalize the programme or, as one UNDP staffer indicated, 'to get at least something done'.<sup>17</sup> But the IDDRP never had any actual operations<sup>18</sup> and was superseded by the Multi-Year DDR Programme, designed to run from January 2009 to June 2012.

During the IDDRP phase, government planners drew up a National DDR Strategic Plan that reiterated the purpose of DDR in the same terms as the CPA and as an effort 'to consolidate the peace process and to create an enabling environment to undertake the activities related to human security, reconstruction and development'.<sup>19</sup> In keeping with the provisions of the CPA, the Strategic Plan entrusted the leadership of the Northern and Southern DDR programmes to the Northern Sudan DDR Commission and Southern Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC), respectively.

The DDR programmes were to receive support from UNDP and the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which were awkwardly joined to form one DDR unit according to the 'integrated' approach described in the 2006 UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS).<sup>20</sup> The IDDRS was a multi-agency undertaking designed to capitalize and build on more than ten years' DDR experience around the world, and Sudan—along with Haiti—was among of its first large test cases. Pressure was on for the DDR planners to adhere to the standards, even if they did not always fit the local context.<sup>21</sup>



▲ One of the first SPLA soldiers to be discharged at the launch of the DDR programme in Mangala, South Sudan, June 2009. The discharge form, which may not be accurate, indicates he had been disarmed 12 years earlier. © UN Photo

In the midst of programme planning, organization building, and jockeying for position, the issue of *who* was going to be demobilized became secondary. In fact, a separate process had started in 2005 that virtually mooted voluntary DDR in South Sudan: the SPLA started paying salaries to its troops. Although payment was sporadic, and often delayed for months at a time as the SPLA's financial systems developed more sophistication, the payments gradually became more regular.<sup>22</sup> Because the prospect of an uneducated ex-combatant earning a livelihood outside of the SPLA was, and remains, bleak, SPLA soldiers would not voluntarily opt for DDR; they would have to be pushed.

The Juba Declaration of 2006<sup>23</sup> obliged the SPLA to absorb members of the South Sudan Defence Forces, the Khartoum-aligned collective of armed groups that had been major combatants during the latter phase of the civil war. The number to be integrated comprised up to 50,000<sup>24</sup> enemy fighters as well as their supporters, including numerous women. A number of incoming commanders were given high ranks. The integration process added to worries among SPLA soldiers who felt unrewarded and unappreciated<sup>25</sup>—and the army leadership took these worries seriously when making decisions about the DDR programme.

In fact, senior SPLA officers had no significant commitment to DDR; the leadership did not wish to lose viable soldiers during the crucial CPA period and knew that the soldiers had no intention of giving up their salaries for the economic uncertainties of civilian life. Yet it was pleased to shed the ranks of individuals whose services were perceived as being of less use in a peacetime army: children associated with armed forces, women, the elderly, and the disabled—known collectively as special needs groups (SNGs)—whose processing the international community viewed as an easy entry route to begin the programme.<sup>26</sup> DDR of SNGs began in June 2009.<sup>27</sup>

## Conflicting conceptions

The purpose of the DDR programme in South Sudan was unclear from the first day. It was included in the CPA as a means of downsizing the respective forces, but neither the SPLA nor the international community intended downsizing to occur before the end of the interim period.<sup>28</sup> While it was included as a 'security arrangement' in the CPA, DDR could not contribute to security without viable civilian employment options for the tens of thousands of ex-combatants in need of livelihoods. By retaining and paying their soldiers, the SPLA had ensured greater security than by forcibly ejecting them.

The CPA stipulation that the DDR programme's objective is to contribute to human security and support social stabilization is vague at best and could apply to a number of diverse programmes operating in South Sudan. In choosing to work first with the SNGs, the DDR programme organizers were directed not by a specific sense of purpose, but rather by what was feasible and permitted by the SPLA.

From the beginning of the process, there were marked differences in conceptions and attitudes among the principal partners with regard to the programme's ultimate aims and objectives. These are described below.

### The international community

Over the last 30 years, the international community has increasingly embraced DDR in post-conflict settings as 'crucial components of both the initial stabilization of war-torn societies as well as their long-term development'.<sup>29</sup> Donors have supported DDR programmes that seek to produce quantifiable security and development results.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the CPA language requiring that the DDR programme be led by state institutions with the international partners playing only a supportive role,<sup>31</sup> the international community has largely driven the DDR programme in South Sudan. As early as the Naivasha peace talks in 2003–04, the international community introduced the concept

of DDR and urged its inclusion in the CPA without knowing the number of participants; consciously or otherwise, it also failed to acknowledge that the SPLA had no immediate interest in downsizing.

The international community's approach to DDR emphasizes lessons learned from previous programmes worldwide. Two concrete examples of DDR 'best practice' are avoiding cantonment and placing an emphasis on the needs of women. Yet the pursuit of 'best practice' has sometimes led to the inclusion of programme facets that are unsuited to the South Sudan context. For example, reinsertion packages are often unnecessary in South Sudan as most programme participants are already living back in their communities.

The focus on process and best practice has led many international actors to neglect or ignore questions of purpose. Some members of the international community have even argued that the purpose is not as paramount; DDR should be done for its own sake or to build confidence—especially in the context of many other CPA commitments not being met.<sup>32</sup>

### The SSDDRC

As the authority tasked with leading DDR in South Sudan, the SSDDRC should have the clearest definitions of the programme's purpose. But while the commission's literature and website repeat the CPA's pledges that DDR should 'contribute to creating an enabling environment for human security' and 'support social stabilization',<sup>33</sup> there is little by way of specific targets and achievement indicators aside from the numerical target of 90,000 participants. Indeed, rather than refining the programme's objectives, SSDDRC Chairman William Deng Deng has suggested that DDR will help improve social services such as clean water and hospitals, outcomes that have little to do with the programme's skills training.<sup>34</sup>

At times the commission's emphasis on numerical targets appears to overshadow the importance of *who* is going through the programme. Although it claims that DDR is designed to 'down-

size and streamline<sup>35</sup> the SPLA, the commission appears to have ignored the fact that many of the programme participants are not on the SPLA payroll.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the contradictory and sloganeering claims it promotes, the SSDDRC's primary motivation for conducting the programme to date clearly has less to do with stated goals than with the simple fact that the CPA tasked it to conduct DDR.<sup>37</sup>

Now that the CPA period is coming to an end the SSDDRC is obliged to rethink the objectives of the DDR programme and to focus on the SPLA's needs and demands. While this shift

may result in an approach that more clearly targets the demobilization of active SPLA members, it remains for the SSDDRC to demonstrate how it will contribute to human security and social stabilization. One concern is the commission's previous statements that the purpose of DDR is to replenish the army, 'taking out the old so that the new can enter'.<sup>38</sup>

### The SPLA

Once the SPLA's preference for cantonment was rejected as too expensive and DDR became civilian-led, the

army lost its initial enthusiasm for the programme.<sup>39</sup> Yet the proposal to focus on SNGs provided the SPLA with an opportunity to comply with the CPA while maintaining its force size. If this contradicted the notion of DDR making a meaningful contribution to security, the international community was well aware of it. As the SPLA's chief of general staff recently said, up to 2011 the force was 'not downsizing, we were even increasing'.<sup>40</sup> It was a no-lose situation for the SPLA: the army was able to show compliance with the CPA; DDR provided them with a social programme for ex-combatants who had already left the army; and they could sustain and even increase their fighting strength.

Because the SPLA maintained complete control of who would be included in the programme, some commanders took the opportunity to offload those who had never fought or had joined following the Juba Declaration. Other commanders created their lists out of individuals who had already left the SPLA but who deserved some support and recognition for their service.

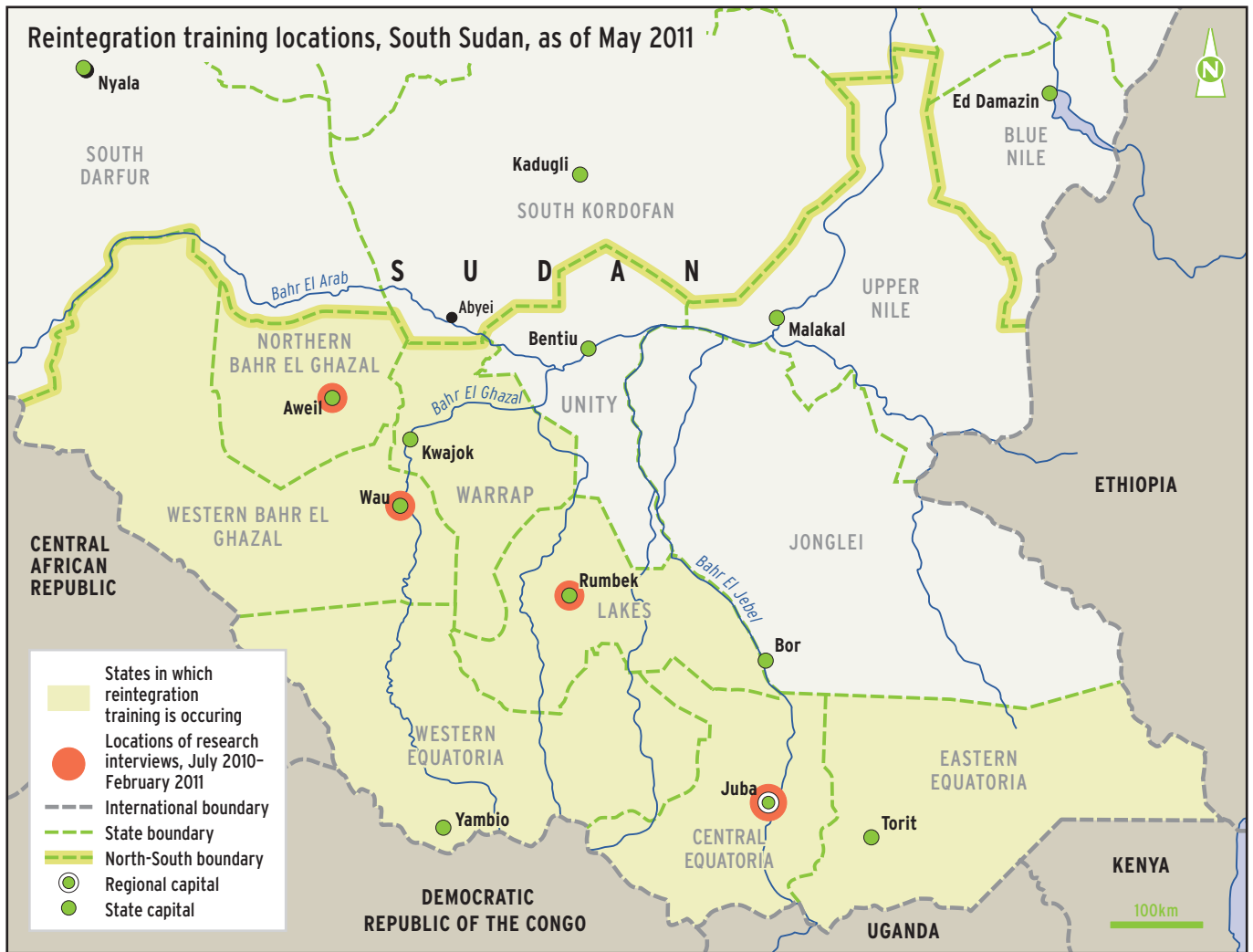
The SPLA does not regard the current DDR programme as worthy of its real fighters and heroes. Since 2006 its so-called Wounded Heroes, numbering some 20,000,<sup>41</sup> have been living in 'assembly areas' throughout South Sudan, where they are cared for at government expense although they are no longer on duty. The SPLA values them highly for the role they played and considers them the 'real' combatants.<sup>42</sup> This is one reason why, though they are ideal candidates for DDR as SNGs, the SPLA will not put Wounded Heroes through the current programme. DDR simply does not provide enough rewards. The other reason is that the Wounded Heroes would probably refuse to enter the DDR programme, having rebelled violently in 2009, when there were delays in the payment of wages, which they still receive.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, while the SPLA has complied with DDR, it has done so only to its own narrow advantage, not to downsize its fighting force, but to abide by the letter of the CPA and offer benefits



▲ An SPLA veteran visits the War Heroes office at the Yei army barracks, South Sudan, May 2010.

© Trevor Snapp



Source: UNMIS

to former members. Beyond these limited goals, it has little or no ownership or buy-in of the wider process. This was illustrated at a two-day DDR review conference held in Juba in November 2010, during which mid-ranking SPLA officers did not present or take part in the discussions, contributing only when directly questioned.

### Who has gone through DDR?

Between July 2010 and February 2011, the Small Arms Survey interviewed 53 participants (18 men and 35 women) undergoing reintegration training in the South Sudan DDR programme. While the sample size is small, it is geographically diverse, including participants in Aweil, Juba, Rumbek, and Wau. A number of patterns in their responses quickly emerged. The most striking was that, although all interviewees had been involved with the SPLA at some point in their lives,

51 out of the 53 were technically ineligible for DDR according to the DDR Standard Operating Procedures.<sup>44</sup> They had either left the SPLA prior to joining the DDR programme (49), or had joined the SPLA after the CPA (11); nine participants fit into both of these disqualifying categories.

Most of those who had already left the SPLA before starting DDR were found in Wau (30 out of 31). These included 7 who had left before 2004 (of which 2 had left as early as 1997); 18 who had left between 2005 and 2009; and 5 who had left in 2010. The most common reason cited for leaving the SPLA was personal circumstances, in particular the desire to be with children or sick or elderly family members. Since leaving the army most interviewees had survived by subsistence agriculture and several had been running their own small businesses, including trading goods, selling phones, running tea shops, and

braiding hair. Almost all (30 out of 31) had heard about the programme for the first time in mid- or late 2010, several years after they had demobilized, and had welcomed it as an unexpected benefit.

The general understanding among Wau participants was that DDR was ‘a programme for those who were once in the army and who are now suffering’.<sup>45</sup> The interviewees were predominantly grateful for the benefits offered, in particular the reintegration package. Two-thirds of the Wau interviewees said they had never received a salary from the SPLA; those who had received a salary said it had been paid sporadically.

Attitudes were significantly different in Aweil, Juba, and Rumbek, where caseloads also included many individuals who had left the SPLA several years before joining the DDR programme. The difference was that they had been forcibly demobilized



▲ Women going through demobilization, Rumbek, South Sudan, 23 March 2010.

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before joining the programme because they were women, elderly, or wounded. In these locations women expressed anger and derision with respect to the programme.<sup>46</sup>

Interviewees saw DDR as a benefits or 'pensions' programme for ex-SPLA members, and a poor one at that—especially among those participants who had been receiving an SPLA salary. Many said they would return to the SPLA if the opportunity arose. None was familiar with the term DDR as referring to a process of transitioning from military to sustainable civilian life.

One in five of all participants interviewed were technically ineligible for DDR because they had joined the SPLA after the CPA, many of them motivated by an opportunity to earn a salary. Most had trained for a year, after which they were told they would go through DDR. The female programme participants insisted that it was primarily women who were sent

to DDR while their fellow male trainees remained in the SPLA or joined the police, fire brigade, prisons, or wildlife services.<sup>47</sup> In Rumbek one woman had joined the SPLA in 2006, spent one year in training, and then left the army in 2007; she was thus ineligible on two counts. For the next three years she lived in Khartoum and Uganda; it was only upon returning to Sudan to visit family that she learned her name was on the list for the DDR programme. Although her case may seem extreme given that she served only one year in the SPLA, it is not unique.

Of the women interviewed, more than three-quarters (28) said they had never had their own gun while in the SPLA, although all claimed they had been trained to use a weapon. Conversely, more than three-quarters (14) of the men interviewed reported having owned a gun while in the SPLA,<sup>48</sup> but all claimed they had

handed in their weapon at the time of their demobilization, several years prior to joining the DDR programme.<sup>49</sup> It is thus surprising that every single interviewee in Wau received an SPLA-supplied discharge certificate stating that the individual had been disarmed and had handed in an 'AK47 and 30 rounds' in 2010. In Aweil, all of the interviewees who had entered the programme as ex-combatants—as opposed to as women associated with armed forces (WAAF)—had precisely the same entry on their discharge certificates (see Box 1).<sup>50</sup>

Notably underrepresented in the caseload are disabled ex-combatants: only 828 of the 11,022 individuals currently being processed are disabled. Consistent with its treatment of the Wounded Heroes, the SPLA appears eager to handle this important group itself. Indeed, the three disabled programme participants who were interviewed—all of whom had left the

## Box 1 Reaping benefits: female ex-combatants and WAAF

DDR programmes are routinely criticized for failing to address women's needs.<sup>51</sup> Some programmes overlook women who, though not combatants, provided wartime support services to the military and depended on the armed forces for survival. Other programmes have failed to provide reintegration packages and services that are suitable for women.

South Sudan DDR programme planners were determined not make these mistakes; as a result, the programme has been unusually inclusive, featuring female representation among programme staff, the construction of separate areas for women at demobilization sites, and the provision of female reinsertion packages. Because of the programme's focus on SNGs—almost half (49 per cent) of the current caseload are women—these aspects have proved important (see Table 1).

During the civil war women in South Sudan served in the SPLA and OAGs primarily in support roles: by cooking, carrying, nursing the wounded, and doing laundry.<sup>52</sup> They were trained in weapon use but rarely took on combat roles. Nevertheless, women associated with these forces describe themselves as 'soldiers' or 'combatants'.<sup>53</sup>

In peacetime, the army has had little use for female support. Women's claims to full membership and solidarity were often disregarded in the CPA period as commanders unceremoniously ordered them out of their ranks. Their resentment at this treatment persists today. Female participants in the Aweil DDR programme expressed anger at being ejected from the SPLA in 2008 by their divisional commander; they claimed it is not possible to file a grievance or to seek redress.<sup>54</sup>

Women released back into civilian society in this way were often quite vulnerable. Most of the ones who had given birth without marrying, as many had, could not return to their families without a dowry. Others were widowed during the war and, separated from their communities, were unable to rely on their deceased husband's family for support; most remained in the SPLA until they were forced out. As these women are predominantly illiterate and often without alternative support structures, the DDR programme has effectively offered them a lifeline.

To a degree not seen in other DDR programmes, the South Sudan DDR planners catered to these 'women associated with armed forces', a category they conceived of as distinct from female combatants—women who take up arms and engage in combat as equals with male soldiers.<sup>55</sup> In this way planners followed international 'best practice' to capture women who normally fall through the cracks of DDR programmes.

The distinction may not work in Sudan, however. The female 'ex-combatants' now going through DDR in the South Sudan context look more like WAAF than soldiers. The vast majority interviewed who were registered in the programme as ex-combatants said they were cooks or nurses to the wounded; many were unmarried or widowed; and most were unpaid.

In fact, the SPLA rejects the term WAAF as 'DDR language'.<sup>56</sup> Proudful of its moral code and its ideology of solidarity,<sup>57</sup> the SPLA finds the term offensive, implying that they treated their female colleagues as 'bush wives' or sex slaves. The army's attitude is that there is no qualitative distinction between women who served as fighters and those who served as cooks.

In an all-female focus group in Aweil in February 2011, eight participants in the DDR programme shared similar stories. Most joined the SPLA during the war and proceeded to cook and care for the wounded; they were ordered to demobilize in 2008. Despite the lack of discernible differences among their experiences, their SPLA discharge certificates, dated mid-2010, categorize some as WAAF and other as ex-combatants. They themselves could not explain this discrepancy. Perhaps, said one, it was because they had registered for DDR on different days. Ironically, one of the WAAF was the only one in the group who had owned a weapon in the SPLA and had used it in battles.

SPLA several years before joining the DDR programme—claimed they were still receiving regular payments from the SPLA and expected them to continue after they had completed the programme.

Apart from these irregularities, DDR does not appear to be contributing to the 'reintegration' of these participants, as all of them had 'reintegrated' into their communities long before joining the programme, and generally without difficulty. The exceptions were women, who were not always welcomed by their families, particularly if they came back with children but without a dowry.

## The verification problem

In trying to explain why so many DDR participants are technically ineligible, programme organizers have argued that the initial caseload, coming from Mangala in 2009,<sup>59</sup> had not been sufficiently screened but that this problem was later corrected in the other sites.<sup>60</sup> Yet the participants from Wau and Aweil, who began the process as late as mid-2010, appear equally ineligible. Instead, the verification process is flawed at multiple levels.

While the SPLA supposedly verifies lists provided by its divisional commanders at the state level against a centralized payroll database or list before sending them on to the SSDDRC, there is no way for the SSDDRC or UNMIS to check this process. In fact, it is unlikely that the SPLA has a centralized payroll database, or the ability to reliably check names against handwritten ledgers. Nor would SPLA headquarters be likely to question the lists drawn up by senior state-level officers about their troops.

By the time the lists are returned to the state demobilization sites, essentially rubber-stamped by the SSDDRC, UNMIS staff can do little more than check that the identity cards (issued by the DDR programme) of the individuals arriving at the site match the names on the master list. 'It's not our job to check if they are in the SPLA or not,' said one UNMIS team manager. 'How could we check it? It's not possible.'<sup>61</sup>

Table 1 South Sudan DDR participants, June 2009–February 2011<sup>58</sup>

State	Registered as male ex-combatants		Registered as female ex-combatants		WAAF	Total
	Able-bodied	Disabled	Able-bodied	Disabled		
Central Equatoria	1,115	172	60	6	763	2,116
Eastern Equatoria	276	127	578	96	0	1,077
Lakes	1,247	191	2,000	101	136	3,675
Western Bahr el Ghazal	553	59	689	9	0	1,310
Northern Bahr el Ghazal	1,846	37	874	7	80	2,844
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,037</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>4,201</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>979</b>	<b>11,022</b>

In late 2009 an external review of the programme that focused on participant eligibility concluded that 'checking for the eligibility and even the identity of the candidates is simply impossible due to the absence of a reliable point of reference'.<sup>62</sup> Donors and the UN asked the SPLA to adopt a more accountable process, but serious inducements—such as withdrawing funds or halting the programme until the problem was fixed—would have jeopardized the CPA, which was not an option.<sup>63</sup>

The verification problem persists today. Despite calls from the international community for better accountability, and with the SSDDRC apparently unwilling to challenge the SPLA on candidate selection, there remains no external, independent verification process. As a result, there are few disincentives for SPLA state commanders to falsify information or use the DDR programme as a kind of social service to assist selected individuals who have already returned to civilian life.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that most DDR participants interviewed had handed in their weapons long before the programme had started,

and many had never had weapons in the first place. Most had demobilized long before the programme started in their area—85 per cent in 2008 or earlier—and most had wholly reintegrated into their communities before beginning the programme or even hearing of its existence.

This failure is widely recognized within the South Sudan DDR community<sup>64</sup> but has not led to open expressions of concern. It is more common to hear criticism of the process, such as the failure to meet the demobilization caseload target; financial mismanagement among partner institutions; and public disagreement between partners<sup>65</sup>—important issues but arguably less critical than the fact that the caseload itself is technically ineligible for the programme.

While UNDP is most probably aware of the issue,<sup>66</sup> its staff members complain that they must go through the SSDDRC and cannot confront the SPLA on verification directly, and are thus powerless. The SSDDRC has no inclination to challenge the SPLA either, preferring to ignore the problem. As one staffer said, 'Who the SPLA put on the list is none of our business.'<sup>67</sup>

## Rethinking DDR

Ensuring that DDR contributes to improved security in South Sudan requires more than adjusting the process. Fundamentally, it requires the buy-in of the SPLA to do more than use the programme to discharge unwanted women and other SNGs or provide benefits to former members. Since the army began paying salaries, however, it risks angering its core fighters if it tries to force them to demobilize. For this reason it may be too late. As one security expert in South Sudan said, 'By 2006, the opportunity to do DDR was over.'<sup>68</sup>

Yet the army leadership recognizes the need to downsize. With an extraordinarily bloated budget that consumes 30–40 per cent of the overall budget of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS),<sup>69</sup> the SPLA's current force size is simply unsustainable. In fact, the army is already carrying out its own 'downsizing' initiatives, such as providing ten tractors to the Wounded Heroes Directorate to encourage agricultural production. This project is a kind of DDR (though the SPLA does not call it that) because the goals are to help these former forces become independent and self-sufficient, which the SPLA chief of staff expects will occur by 2012.<sup>70</sup>

A similar initiative is the Veteran Security Services, the only private security company in South Sudan whose guards are licensed to carry weapons. Set up initially as a joint private–public enterprise, the company recruits exclusively ex-SPLA soldiers, predominantly from the Directorate of Wounded Heroes. Recruits receive training in a new profession and a salary sufficient to persuade them to leave the SPLA.

Understanding the SPLA's sense of loyalty and responsibility to its soldiers and its belief that these soldiers should be rewarded after leaving the army is key to approaching demobilization in South Sudan. The current programme's failure to acknowledge these principles means that it will not process the 'ex-combatants' whom the programme professes to demobilize and reintegrate. There is a need for a



▲ Reintegration graduation ceremony, Juba, South Sudan, 4 November 2010.

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new approach to DDR, one that takes as its starting point the SPLA's genuine aspirations for its former soldiers.

## Planning for independence

The CPA's term draws to a close on 9 July 2011, and with it ends South Sudan's obligation to conduct DDR as part of the peace agreement. Planning is now under way to reorient the programme, given that it does not provide sufficient incentive for soldiers to leave the SPLA.

As of late April 2011, the SPLA, the SSDDRC, and the UN's Integrated Technical Assessment and Planning Team—empowered to make recommendations to the UN Security Council about a future mission in South Sudan when UNMIS's mandate runs out in July 2011—had entered discussions on the future of DDR in South Sudan. The conversations followed a period in which the SPLA and SSDDRC held closed-door meetings from which the UN and most other international actors were excluded.<sup>71</sup> The expectations are that by late May 2011 the SPLA will present new DDR policies and processes for approval by the GoSS cabinet.<sup>72</sup> Many involved in the current programme believe that the intention is to better address the SPLA's needs.

Although the discussions are not yet publicly reported, early reports indicate that the programme may be changed radically, reverting to the original idea of cantonment and providing soldiers with reintegration training over an extended period (probably nine months) while they are still in the SPLA, still receiving a salary, and acclimatizing to the notion of leaving the military. The numbers are also being revised. A DDR target of 80,000 is now under discussion, apparently calculated to take into account of the current SPLA size, the estimated number of troops from other armed groups who are to be integrated, and the ultimate aim of the SPLA to reach a force size of 100,000.<sup>73</sup> There is also discussion of making the Ministry for Defence the lead authority for DDR, thus increasing military ownership of the process.

Many of these developments are propitious. The most important new feature is the full engagement of the SPLA in the DDR process. The leadership, freshly mobilized on the issue, seems likely to 'throw out the DDR rule book'<sup>74</sup> and reorient the programme away from global best practices and towards local needs and demands. Reversing the conventional order of demobilization and reintegration and continuing to pay soldiers while they receive reintegration training are two examples of unusual, but potentially pragmatic, solutions in the context of a very weak economy and a very strong SPLA.

But a number of issues loom large. The first concerns the seriously limited employment opportunities in the private economy—the missing 'pull factor' drawing soldiers back into civilian life.<sup>75</sup> The GoSS's recent decision to increase the salaries of SPLA soldiers,<sup>76</sup> an extraordinary move considering that the SPLA is simultaneously citing a need to downsize, exacerbates this dilemma. It echoes the decision in 2006 to introduce salaries to the SPLA in the first place, further decreasing soldiers' incentive to leave the army.

The second, related issue revolves around the expectations of SPLA soldiers for rewards for their service. After spending more than 20 years fighting for liberation, this is a natural expectation, but not one the GoSS can fulfil without help from the international community—help that it is clearly unwilling to provide. Despite this reality, SPLA leadership and rank and file continue to believe a pension programme is imminent in the post-independence period. Expectations are growing and could become dangerous if not addressed effectively.

Another issue is the target caseload for a new DDR programme, which is up for discussion once again without the benefit of an official registration list. Although there is more information now about the size of the SPLA than there was in 2005, new proposals will remain estimates within tens of thousands. A strategic defence review is essential to help the SPLA produce a better estimate of the actual DDR caseload.

Finally, there is still no clear consensus on the objectives of any new DDR programme. While the international community has consistently emphasized security improvements, the SPLA remains focused on the financial necessity to downsize, though the question remains as to whether the SPLA and the SSDDRC genuinely see DDR as an opportunity to downsize or as a tool to replace and replenish soldiers.<sup>77</sup> In late April 2011, even as discussions for the new DDR programme were under way, reports emerged that the SPLA was carrying out the forced conscription of 6,000 men in Unity state.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusions

There can be little doubt that the current DDR programme is providing valuable material, financial, and training assistance to its SNG participants. Whether it has achieved any genuine disarmament, demobilization, or reintegration—or any significant improvements in human security or peace consolidation—is doubtful. One recent assessment of the programme finds that it is a limited and 'expensive livelihoods support programme'.<sup>79</sup> In view of the price tag of USD 55 million through December 2010,<sup>80</sup> a strong argument can be made that the money would have been better spent on genuine livelihood programmes or a pension fund, the SPLA's keenest aspiration for its veterans.

Whatever the DDR programme's many failings, now that its *raison d'être*—the CPA—comes to a close, programme partners and donors have the chance to address the real objectives of DDR and design a new approach. If it is to be successful, lessons from the current programme must be absorbed. The first and most important step has already been taken: placing the SPLA at the forefront of programme design. This move, taken by the SPLA itself, will ensure that the design of a new programme meets the army's needs.

The focus on women's needs should also be retained in any new programme. DDR may not be the appropriate programme for some of these women,

since most of them are already demobilized and reintegrated, and the majority were never armed. But the education and livelihoods training it has provided to thousands of women who would otherwise have had few prospects will reap extended benefits throughout South Sudan.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for the new programme is establishing an objective on which all parties can agree. The SPLA remains focused on the economic imperative to downsize and on rewarding its soldiers for their long, largely unpaid service. The international community demands a programme that improves security. These two objectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they generate conflicts of interest when it comes to the crucial question of candidate eligibility. Donors will be obliged to decide, for example, whether they are willing to fund the DDR of individuals who never took part in the war and who may not be relevant from a security perspective—but whom the SPLA wishes to prioritize.

Agreement on the programme's overarching objective could also be a factor in creating better indicators of success. The current programme's achievements are measured primarily in terms of how many people have passed through it rather than whether they were the 'right' candidates or whether the programme has contributed to security in South Sudan. The SPLA and the international community have an opportunity to consider these issues and ensure they are properly addressed the second time around. ■

## Notes

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1 This paper covers DDR for adults in the South only; children underwent a separate DDR process.

- 2 Kron (2010); Machar Teny (2011); Schlindwein (2010); *Sudan Tribune* (2010); Sthlm Policy Group (2010b); Banal and Rowe (2009); Brethfeld (2010).
- 3 GoS and SPLM/A (2005, ch. VI, paras. 1c, 3e).
- 4 Barltrop (2008, p. 23); Lewis (2009, pp. 35–44).
- 5 Kefford, Preston, and Smith (2008, p. 18).
- 6 Telephone interview with a former UNDP staff member, Nairobi, February 2011.
- 7 Barltrop (2008, p. 20).
- 8 GoS and SPLM/A (2005, Annexure 1, para. 23.1).
- 9 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.
- 10 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.
- 11 See Faltas (2005) and Knight and Özerdem (2004).
- 12 Telephone interview with a former UNDP staff member, Nairobi, February 2011.
- 13 Stone (forthcoming).
- 14 Nichols (2011, p. 12, box 1).
- 15 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.
- 16 Telephone interview with a former UNDP staff member, Nairobi, February 2011.
- 17 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.
- 18 Vrey (2009, p. 60).
- 19 GNU (2007, p. 2).
- 20 For a discussion of how UNDP and UNMIS failed to cooperate effectively on DDR in South Sudan, see Nichols (2011).
- 21 Nichols (2011, pp. 38–39).
- 22 Rands (2010, p. 25).
- 23 SPLA and SSDF (2006, p. 1).
- 24 Rands (2010, p. 10).
- 25 Interview with a senior SPLA officer, Juba, July 2010.
- 26 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Nairobi, February 2011.
- 27 UNMIS (2009).
- 28 Interview with a former UNDP staff member, Juba, November 2010.
- 29 UN (2011).
- 30 Robert Muggah describes DDR programmes on a spectrum ranging from the minimalist, focusing on security promotion alone, to the maximalist, which have a multidimensional mandate including enhanced development and fundamental changes in governance. He notes that DDR programming appears to be moving towards the latter approach, including in Sudan. See Muggah (2009, pp. 3–4).
- 31 GoS and SPLM/A (2005, Annexure 1, para. 24.3).
- 32 Interview with a UNDP staff member, Juba, January 2011.
- 33 GoS and SPLM/A (2005, Annexure 1, para. 23.1).
- 34 Interview with William Deng Deng, Juba, July 2010.
- 35 See SSDDRC (n.d.b).
- 36 Interviews with UNDP staff, Juba, July 2010–February 2011.
- 37 SSDDRC (n.d.a).
- 38 Interview with William Deng Deng, Juba, July 2010.
- 39 Interview with former a UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.
- 40 Interview with Gen. James Hoth Mai, Juba, February 2011.
- 41 Interview with a South Sudan security expert, Juba, March 2011.
- 42 Interview with a senior SPLA officer, Juba, July 2010.
- 43 Rands (2010, p. 43).
- 44 SSDDRC and UN (2010, p. 13).
- 45 Interview with a DDR participant, Wau, February 2011.
- 46 Interview with a DDR participant, Wau, February 2011.
- 47 Interview with a DDR participant, Juba, July 2010.
- 48 Of the four men who claimed they had not had their own gun while in the SPLA, two described themselves as drivers, one as a porter, and one had joined the SPLA post-CPA and had only been involved with training. All the other men interviewed defined themselves as soldiers or 'fighters'.
- 49 One of the women who claimed to have owned a gun while in the SPLA said that it was still in her possession and declared, 'I will give the SPLA my gun when they give me a pension!'
- 50 Discharge certificates in Juba and Rumbek were not examined.
- 51 Bouta (2005); Farr (2002); de Watteville (2002); Douglas et al. (2004).
- 52 Stone (forthcoming).
- 53 Interview with a senior SPLA officer, Juba, August 2010.
- 54 Comments made during a focus group interview with DDR participants, Aweil, February 2011.
- 55 Interview with an SSDDRC gender officer, Juba, August 2010.
- 56 Interview with a senior SPLA officer, Juba, July 2010.
- 57 The SPLA drew up a code of conduct—the Sudan People's Revolutionary Laws, SPLM/SPLA Punitive Provisions 1983 (SPLA Code)—which, among other regulations, prohibited abuse of civilians and rape. All the women interviewed for this study (both women who were still in the SPLA and women who had left) were adamant that rape and sexual abuse were not common within the SPLA; many appeared affronted by the suggestion. Many interviewees claimed that they had been more vulnerable to rape and sexual abuse from armed groups as civilians. Furthermore, research conducted

by UNDP indicates that forced marriage or the taking of 'bush wives' did occur among other armed groups. Correspondence with a UNDP staff member, Juba, March 2011.

58 Data supplied by UNDP, February 2011.

59 This caseload was subsequently divided among several states.

60 Interview with a UNDP staff member, Juba, February 2011.

61 Interview with an UNMIS staff member, February 2011.

62 Banal and Rowe (2009, p. 19).

63 Correspondence with a UNDP staff member, 16 March 2011.

64 Interview with an implementing partner programme coordinator, Rumbek, July 2010.

65 Brethfeld (2010); Kron (2010); Machar Teny (2011); PwC (2010); Schindwein (2010); Sthlm Policy Group (2010b); *Sudan Tribune* (2010).

66 Interviews with UNDP staff in Juba, Rumbek, and Wau, July 2010–March 2011.

67 Interview with an SSDDRC staff member, Juba, August 2010.

68 Interview with a security expert, Juba, February 2011.

69 UNMIS (2011, p. 39).

70 Interview with Gen. James Hoth Mai, Juba, February 2011.

71 Interview with a UN staff member, Juba, March 2011. Initially, the only international actors who were allowed to sit in on the discussions were British and Ethiopian advisers drawn from the UK's Security Sector Development and Defence Transformation project (sponsored by the Department for International Development) and a technical adviser from the Bonn International Center for Conversion, a German non-profit organization.

72 Uma (2011).

73 Statement made by an SSDDRC deputy technical adviser, Juba, April 2011

74 Interview with a UN staff member, Juba, March 2011.

75 Interview with a UN staff member, Juba, March 2011.

76 The increase has yet to be publicly reported. One observer reported that it may entail a doubling of the current salary (interview with a South Sudan security expert, Juba, March 2011).

77 Interview with the SSDDRC chairperson, Juba, July 2010.

78 Garang (2011).

79 Sthlm Policy Group (2010b, p. 3).

80 This figure is based on a rough halving of the total cost of the DDR programme for North and South Sudan (USD 117.7 million). See Sthlm Policy Group (2010a, p. 55).

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## HSBA project summary

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a multi-year project administered by the Small Arms Survey. It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian government, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely, empirical research, the project supports violence reduction initiatives, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes, incentive schemes for civilian arms collection, as well as security sector reform and arms control interventions across Sudan. The HSBA also offers policy-relevant advice on redressing insecurity.

Sudan *Issue Briefs* are designed to provide timely periodic snapshots of baseline information in a reader-friendly format. The HSBA also generates a series of longer and more detailed Working Papers in English and Arabic, available at <<http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org>>.

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