

The CPA-DDR Program in South Sudan: What went wrong?

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Abstract

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was hastily crafted, in part, by those who wished to see the creation of a new state with its associated geopolitical and economic advantages. They highlighted the need for the DDR program but neither the government negotiators nor other parties paused to ponder about the specificities of the environment in which the sensitive and much complex program was going to be implemented. Consequently, many subsequent steps largely failed. Therefore, this study investigates the factors that hindered the successful implementation of the interim DDR¹ program, and what could be done to effectively conduct the planned second phase of DDR program, which was scheduled to start in 2012 but has been stalled several times. The deterrents to success included: lack of political will, tensions among major stakeholders, limited and delayed funding, the miserable economy, lack of inclusion and participation, the nature of implementation environment, an unsustainable reintegration package, and false assumptions. The participants highlighted the need to revisit the reintegration package to include a special loan scheme for ex-combatants, education and health care, pension, access to land especially by women ex-combatants, and a housing scheme among others, in order to make the second phase a success.

¹ DDR is the short form for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. The CPA-DDR program, commonly referred to as the Interim *DDR Program*, was supposed to start immediately after the signing of the CPA and end in 2011. Then, the second phase of DDR would start in 2012 depending on the availability of resources

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Introduction

After a long period of intensive negotiation, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed between the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) in 2005. This was a major launch pad for further achievements in the realm of peace-building in the greater Sudan as it formalized the permanent ceasefire and allowed community peace initiatives to begin. The CPA had six protocols: The Machackos protocol, Protocol on Power Sharing, Protocol on Wealth-Sharing, Protocol on the Resolution of Conflict in Abyei area, Protocol on the Resolution of Conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, and the Agreement on Security Arrangements. With respect to the reintegration of ex-combatants, the protocol on security arrangements was vital. This urged the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the SPLM/A to cease fighting and work together towards peace and security in the region especially the contested border areas. This protocol called for the institution of the Interim National DDR Coordination Council to oversee the Interim DDR program in Sudan and South Sudan.²

The specific objectives of the DDR program were to: prepare ex-combatants socially, politically and psychologically to fit into civilian life; support and promote harmonious co-existence between ex-combatants and the local communities; support self-help projects to ensure economic self-reliance among ex-combatants; promote the needs of other groups associated with ex-combatants such as children and women among others; reduce the proliferation of small and light weapons; and educate the host communities about the values of personal hygiene, malaria and HIV/AIDS preventive measures among other things. These objectives were within the overarching aim of the 2007 DDR Strategic Plan, which was to ensure conditions favourable for the implementation of peace-building activities, such as security sector reform and infrastructural reconstruction.³

It is instructive to note that the aforementioned objectives were partially or never fulfilled. Those, who largely wished to see the creation of a new state with its associated economic and geopolitical advantages, crafted the CPA in haste. Consequently, many steps taken thereafter went wrong. They advocated for the DDR program but did not pause to detail specificities or consider the environment in which the sensitive and much complex program was going to be

² Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), 2005

³ GoS 2007

implemented. Moreover, the SPLA and government negotiators never raised DDR as one of the most critical issues that needed urgent attention. Priority was instead given to a power and resource sharing cease fire, and border security among others. This exposed the DDR of ex-combatants to risks given the underfunding and other context specific issues. The whole process was fraught; host communities were not fully involved and many assumptions were made such as the availability and access of land and voluntary return of ex-combatants to their home areas.

Ultimately, close to half of the DDR target was demobilized. Less than a quarter of the target was reintegrated less than a quarter of their target. This indicates that the majority of ex-combatants were never reintegrated. Being jobless and redundant, they were easily promised economic fortunes and reabsorbed in different militia or rebel groups fighting the government,⁴ the latest group being under the general command of the maverick former vice president-Riek Machar. On December 15 2013, Riek Machar attempted a coup d'état and sustained rebellion against the government because of the unpopularity of the government particularly among the ex-combatants and some factions within the SPLM/A.⁵

This study thus seeks to find out factors that hindered the successful implementation of the interim DDR program, and what could be done to effectively conduct the planned second phase of DDR program, which was scheduled to start in 2012 but has been postponed several times. The deterrents to success included: lack of political will, tensions among major stakeholders, limited and delayed funding, the miserable economy, lack of inclusion and participation, the nature of implementation environment, an unsustainable reintegration package, and false assumptions. This study also presents the participants' views on what could be done to make the second phase of DDR program a success, and concludes by highlighting the possible way forward.

⁴ Interview with a key informant 28.02. 2013

⁵ Yuar Ayul 2014

Note on methodology

Primarily, the methodology that informed this study was qualitative and derived from the researcher's vast ground experience in the greater Sudan and Horn of Africa. The researcher has spent two years in South Sudan, and ten years following and participating in the political debates in the region. Besides, primary data was collected in the months of February, March and April 2013. The target population consisted of the residents from six parishes of Juba-county namely: Nothern Bari, Muniki, Kator, Lobono, Rajafu and Lokiriri. Overall, the sample size was 118 interviewees and one focus group discussion in each parish. These included ex-combatants and their host communities, key informants included traditional leaders, Payam/Parish officials and the UNDP and DDR Commission officials.

Secondary data was also collected through documentary review of sources such as books, articles, government published interviews, newspapers, briefing papers, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNIMISS) reports. Further, all ethical concerns were considered. The researcher sought permission from the University of Juba, which he was attached to as an African Leadership Centre Fellow, and the DDR Commission - Government of South Sudan. Similarly, informed consent of all participants was sought, on the basis that "*permission alone is not enough; people need to know what they are being asked to participate in so that they can make an informed decision*".⁶ As such, all potential participants were informed of the purpose of the study in advance, and given the opportunity to decide whether or not to participate. The participants were assured of utmost confidentiality, anonymity and protection from any possible harm arising from the study.

⁶ Neuman 2007:54

Political will, tensions and funding

Despite SPLA's real powers in terms of deciding the eligible candidates for the DDR, they had mixed feelings about the DDR program. It is argued that the SPLA demobilized some ex-combatants, while at the same time they were recruiting and absorbing other youthful forces especially from different militias. Consequently, the SPLA rather than shrinking grew in size despite the on-going DDR. Whereas, intrinsically, they wanted a big force that would potentially counteract any threat from Sudan, they were under pressure from the donors to reduce the size of the army.⁷ Moreover, the unpredictable inflow of donor money complicated and stifled progress. The DDR program that was supposed to kick off immediately after the signing of the CPA was delayed for four years partly due to delayed funding and logistical challenges.⁸

Further, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), which was the sole funder of its DDR commission, on many occasions was too weak economically, to pay the commission workers' monthly salaries on time. This was attributed to meagre revenues, exacerbated by the dynamics and complexities in the export of oil through Khartoum's oil pipeline to the seaport. It is imperative to note that over 90 percent of South Sudan's income is generated from oil revenues and therefore, any halt in production makes virtually all government programs stand still. It is remarkable that on some occasions, the offices of South Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC) remained closed due to lack of money to buy fuel for the generators and driving to the field.⁹ Financial constraints also affected the UNDP's operations as many activities could not be carried out on time because money to procure necessary logistics would not be readily available at times.¹⁰

The DDR program initially attracted attention of the funders because it was viewed as part of the CPA implementation process; however, when the CPA expired, funders became a bit hesitant in dispensing money for the program that was after all not registering convincing results.¹¹ Besides, the UNDP, which was technically in charge of the reintegration component of DDR, never addressed the question of extravagance and misappropriation of funds. A case in point was the UNDP's failure to account for USD\$450,000 and the disappearance of 44 laptops in

⁷ Brethfeld 2010; HSBA, 2011; Arthur, 2012

⁸ RSSPPD 2011

⁹ Interview with an official of SSDDRC 14.03.2013

¹⁰ Interview with the UNDP official 15.03.2013. Donor funding for the first phase stopped as of 31st December 2012

¹¹ HSBA, 2011

2010.¹² This raised skepticism about UNDP's motivation and willingness to ameliorate the well-being of ex-combatants. The UNDP became too independent to the extent of contracting the implementing partners without consulting the government DDR Commission. In fact, the World Bank was being viewed as the best potential replacement after the UNDP's mandate expired at the end of 2012.¹³

Furthermore, tensions between the UN Mission in Sudan and the New York main office severely affected the timely release of funds, a matter that jeopardized the daily running of the DDR exercises. Being the major financier, the UN's grip on funds earned it leverage and ultimately dictated the kind of implementing partner to be contracted and the nature of demobilization and reintegration support.¹⁴ During the implementation process, relations between the UN, the SPLA and the DDR commission were also never the best.¹⁵ The cause of rancorous relations revolved around resource allocation procedures, accountability and priority.¹⁶ Although the government of South Sudan was presumed to be the primary stakeholder, it had weak economic muscle and therefore could not influence the direction of the DDR program as the donors determined when, how and the kind of support to be given. These misunderstandings, rivalries, bureaucracy, corruption, and apathy among major stakeholders were evident and suffocated the DDR activities but did not get much attention in the media and other forums.¹⁷

Apathy was not limited to international players but also local stakeholders. Observers noted disinterest when the police and wildlife forces representatives failed to attend the planning for the second phase of the DDR program despite their formal invitation.¹⁸ Although their lack of interest may not entirely account for their absence, the available literature suggests that a section of serving armed officers perceived the program as a waste of time and unhelpful to the war heroes and heroines.¹⁹

The attitude and willingness of primary stakeholders especially the politicians and technocrats is essential if fruitful results are to be achieved. No interventions can ever effectively take place in the absence of a positive attitude among policy makers and practitioners. In his analysis of the factors that account for the success of any DDR program, Rolston asserts that the will of

¹² Kron, 2010

¹³ Interview with Central Equatorial State-DDR Commission official 22 March 2013

¹⁴ SSDDRC, 2011b

¹⁵ SSDDRC, 2011a

¹⁶ Sudan Tribune, 2010

¹⁷ Willems and Rouw, 2011; Kron, 2010

¹⁸ HSBA, 2012

¹⁹ Willems and Row, 2011

political leaders, guidance and active participation of ex-combatants is a very crucial ingredient.²⁰ Similarly, in a study of the World Bank's DDR experience in Africa, Nat Colleta also reiterates that the success of DDR is a function of mainly political will, transparency and accountability of participating institutions, consulting and listing of the needs of ex-combatants according to their categories and vulnerability.²¹ None of these factors was fully achieved in the case of South Sudan.

²⁰ Rolston 2007

²¹ Nat Colleta 1997

The effect of a miserable economy

The end of the war initiated a long journey toward economic reconstruction in order to uplift the war-ravaged society from tatters to a self-sustaining economy. Everyone was eager to participate in this process as indicated by millions of returnees including professionals from Europe, Canada and America who left their lucrative jobs to serve their motherland. However, on arriving in the new-country, they were flabbergasted by the pathetic and unbearable standards of living in many states. This prompted many of them to find shelter in Central Equatorial State (CES). Of the ten states of South Sudan, Central Equatorial State is the safest and most food secure state with fertile soils favourable for agriculture. The fact that it hosts the seat of the government attracts many people who wish to benefit from social services and state favours. Ex-combatants from different states were particularly eager to gain state benefits given the role they played during the liberation struggle. The popular view among ex-combatants was that “*time for suffering had ended and now it is time to reward*” them.²² Their high expectations implied that most of them were ignorant of the fact that the nascent government did not have enough resources to meet all their needs.

In early 2012, when the oil pipeline was closed, following the border clashes with Sudan, the only major source of government income was the revenue collected at border points. The government was even struggling to raise resources to cater for the serving soldiers and civil servants. The mistake the government made was to raise the economic expectations of ex-combatants; through numerous press briefings, ex-combatants were promised pension and land, and yet the economy was miserable. All sectors were starting from scratch. Agriculture, which is the predominant sector that employs many in the region, was also performing dismally hence exacerbating food insecurity. A booming economy would provide a safety net for ex-combatants. In Angola for example, the flourishing oil sector provided an incentive for most serving officers to voluntarily undergo DDR in order to engage in the booming oil business.²³ However, in South Sudan the oil sector that would employ quite a number of ex-combatants faced a number of challenges including but not limited to insecurity.

Whereas the Khartoum economy had developed socio-economic infrastructure such as hospitals, passable roads, schools, and a big private sector that offered employment opportunities to ex-combatants, Juba’s embryonic economy had one of the poorest socio-

²² Interview with a male ex-combatant on 29.03.2013

²³ UN/OSAA, 2007

economic infrastructures in Africa,²⁴ with impassable roads, inaccessibility to clean water, poor housing, and pathetic basic health care especially in rural communities.²⁵ This depressingly affected the reintegration of ex-combatants prompting them to move in large numbers to Juba city, where economic life turned out to be not much better. And yet, the CPA-DDR program²⁶ gave uniform reintegration packages to the ex-combatants in both Sudan and South Sudan without considering the unique and appalling socioeconomic conditions of the ex-combatants in South Sudan.²⁷

The economic life of women ex-combatants and their associates was worse despite calls from women activists to prioritize the specific needs of women. Women relentlessly fought alongside men until the end of the war. They were in different departments serving as nurses, gun carriers, cooks, cleaners, carers for children born during the war, carers for the injured, not to mention being involved in espionage among other things. However, the independence they fought for is yet to deliver tangible outcomes in terms of access to basic needs and equitable ownership of properties such as land to mention but a few. Their vulnerability was compounded by lack of participation in decision making and low literacy levels, which made them unqualified for most of the jobs in government and the private sector. Generally, women were economically marginalized as men controlled household incomes. This study found that female-headed households were particularly more vulnerable mainly due to inaccessibility to land, which directly translated into food insecurity. The majority of women headed household families indicated that they lacked sufficient food and school fees for their children. They also lacked specific medical needs and suffered from stigmatization and trauma associated with the war mayhems they went through. Fifteen percent of women ex-combatants revealed that their husbands perished during the war and therefore, denial of the “national cake” meant failure to recognize the contribution made by their husbands during the war.²⁸

²⁴ During rainy season, travelling from Juba to Jongolei a distance of less than 200km takes 10 hour drive due to poor state of the road

²⁵ Mwenda, 2012

²⁶ The CPA-DDR program commonly known as the first multi-year DDR was implemented before the independence of South Sudan. The overseer of the program was the South Sudan DDR commission which was under the National DDR commission that was headquartered in Khartoum

²⁷ PACT 2010

²⁸ Focus Group Discussion with women ex-combatants on 04.04.2013

The Reintegration Package: Too Little, Too Late

Ideally, the reintegration package should include three broad categories: psychological, social and economic support. Economic reintegration support should involve formal education, vocational training, employment creation, and self-help livelihood projects. Social reintegration support should involve community sensitization, reconciliation process, life skills and psychological support.²⁹ These should be preceded by the reinsertion package - the support that ex-combatants receive upon their demobilization as they await the comprehensive reintegration package. This is usually supposed to last them for a few months.

In South Sudan, the reintegration package options included agricultural assistance such as poultry, arable and livestock farming, bee keeping, fishery, or forestry. The second option – business – involved training in phone repair and charging, telephone “air time” sales, bakery, restaurant management, brick-making and shoe-making and catering. The third option was vocational training, which included carpentry, plumbing, IT skills, tailoring, welding, construction, and food processing. The last option was an adult literacy education programme to help those who missed school during the war to acquire basic education.³⁰ However, ex-combatants indicated that their priorities were fees for their children, land especially around Juba County, a loan scheme, clean water, medical care and a special health insurance scheme for the wounded heroes among others.³¹ This suggests that the reintegration package was devoid of fundamental elements necessary for the ex-combatants’ wellbeing.

Some ex-combatants waited for demobilization assistance in vain and decided to reintegrate themselves. The DDR commission in collaboration with SPLM later called them for DDR assistance but only a handful of them turned up due to lack of transport and other challenges. Moreover, some of the members who reported did not pass the eligibility criteria due to lack of documentary evidence. Even those who received the demobilization assistance and later the reintegration package did not feel that much had been changed in their lives hence justifying the notion of “too little- too late”. In 2010, a study done by STHLM policy group³² noted that there

²⁹ Micheal, 2006

³⁰ Interview with the reintegration officer DDR commission Central Equatorial state 27.03.2013

³¹ Focus Group Discussion with ex-combatants on 26.03.2013

³² STHLM Policy Group, (2010), South Sudan DDR Programme Review Report, Stockholm, STHLM Policy Group, 65.

was a popular feeling among the aged SPLA cadres that the reintegration package was insufficient and had no relevancy in fostering their development. The former armed fighters argued that the DDR program was limited to a few privileged individuals who were either connected to the bigwigs in the SPLA or paid some economic inducements to access the reintegration assistance. Moreover, the ex-combatants contended that their package was devoid of the pension that would support them during old age. Although the government kept promising pension, it remained a politically sensitive issue since their counterparts (ex-combatants in Sudan) were receiving it.³³

The majority of the ex-combatants admitted that they were unhappy and not satisfied by the reintegration package³⁴. To portray their anger, the ex-combatants at one time refused to talk to officials of the DDR Commission and other organizations, accusing them of neglect. In another incident, an ex-combatant reportedly attacked one of the staff of the Commission.³⁵ However, the trainers argued that high expectations, lack of interest and high levels of illiteracy among ex-combatants were one of the stumbling blocks towards meaningful reintegration. As shown in Table 1 below, some ex-combatants did not finish the reintegration training because they lost interest, were too aged and illiterate to follow the training sessions, or had family obligations to attend to such as guarding their families and family property against potential attacks from invading communities.³⁶

Table 1: Showing the total number of Ex-combatants that received material reintegration packages in South Sudan as of June 2011

No. of Ex-combatants Disarmed and Demobilized	No. of XCs Counseled	No. of XCs that finished training	No. XCs that received the reintegration material package
12,525	12,288	7,335	6,546

Source: Extracted from Sudan DDR Monthly Newsletter May/June 2011

³³ Brethfeld, 2010

³⁴ Interview with ex-combatants 28.03.2013

³⁵ Interview with an official of DDR Commission 15.03.2013

³⁶ Interview with UNDP official 15.03.2013

As illustrated in the table above, the DDR program managed to demobilize 12,525 ex-combatants out of the 35000 ex-combatants belonging to Special Needs Groups (SNG) by June 2011. The above table also indicates that the gap between demobilization and reintegration was too wide. Out of 12,525 that were demobilized, only close to a half (6,546 ex-combatants) were trained and given the reintegration material package. This dismal performance was attributed to several factors but most outstanding were bureaucracy and financial profligacy. It was reported that the UNDP employed more international staff than local folks. These locals actually played a far more active role than the international staff who did not understand the terrain. Ostensibly, the UNDP spent welfare-money for ex-combatants on international salaries, expensive laptops, generators, four-wheel drive cars, international consultants and staffs' exorbitant remuneration that included R&R (Rest & Relaxation) allowances after every 4-6 weeks in posh hotels.³⁷ Efficiency would have saved a lot of money and increased the amount and quality of the reintegration package, which was reported to be inadequate. For example, courses such as carpentry, electrical engineering, and IT skills took less than three months.³⁸ This was too short and insufficient; it required at least 6-9 months.

³⁷ Interview with South Sudan DDR Commission official, 22 March 2013

³⁸ Interview with South Sudan DDR Commission official 16 March 2013

Inclusion, Participation and Individualized Approach

The DDR, especially the reintegration element of it, aims at addressing the needs of ex-combatants and their associates. This requires community initiatives that focus on liberating the mindset of participants through socio-economic empowerment.³⁹ The success of any community project such as DDR largely depends on involvement of the beneficiaries. Although such projects and programs might at times be initiated from the top, the design and implementation should largely be informed by the grassroots contribution in terms of ideas and guidance. The folks at grass root know better seasonal variations, the whereabouts of the nearest water catchments and other local unique complexities.

In Afghanistan for example, consultation with the local communities enabled the de-miners to identify high-risk areas for de-mining. By the end of the program, ex-combatants who participated had also acquired essential skills necessary for de-mining.⁴⁰ In his book *“Rural Development: Putting Last First”*⁴¹ Chambers reiterates the same as he argues that the greatest mistake foreign community workers make is to assume that they know it all, hence overlooking the input of the affected people. Therefore, any attempt to discount local knowledge and contribution renders the whole program useless and rather portrays it as something intended for reasons other than community transformation. The community understands best their scale of preference; they know what their priorities are and what should come last. They do not need instructors, but facilitators to guide them to make better choices.

In South Sudan, there was a general perception that the host communities including their leaders were not fully engaged in all reintegration activities, a factor that raised misconceptions and high expectations among the beneficiaries. The local administrators’ involvement was limited to activities such as radio announcements (over the UN owned Radio Miraya), which moreover reached only urban and peri-urban areas.⁴² Ultimately, many ex-combatants missed out mainly due to lack of information, transport and other unreported challenges. It is instructive to recall that by the time actual reintegration started a number of ex-combatants had already

³⁹ Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013

⁴⁰ Piedmont, 2012

⁴¹ Chambers , R. (1983)

⁴² Interview with Key informant (Payam/Parish) official 02.04.2013

reintegrated themselves, having waited for the much anticipated reintegration package in vain.⁴³ Moreover, the reintegration package options were already predetermined; they did not consult the ex-combatants on what should constitute their package. Consequently, some ex-combatants chose some package options only because they were the best on offer.

Adequate sensitization and engagement of ex-combatants would create awareness about the values of a reintegration program and most importantly, what to expect from the benefactors. Further, issues of eligibility of beneficiaries, the nature of the reintegration package, when and how the program was to be conducted needed to be clarified. They would also be taught how to resolve disputes related to reintegration and also local agents would be trained to represent the DDR officials at lower levels in terms of follow-ups of the program. Furthermore, context specific issues, expectations and fears would have been addressed.

A well engaged community could easily understand and also raise resources locally to supplement the DDR package for ex-combatants. Furthermore, in remote villages of South Sudan, community mobilization through local leaders was necessary because they deliver information household to household, which was not the case during the first phase of DDR. When trained local mobilizers are facilitated and entrusted with community sensitization they are most likely to change the perceptions of their communities. They eat, drink and live with them, and most importantly, they better understand the perceptions of their communities. Local mobilizers are easily trusted and listened to, and because of that the local communities would feel ownership of the DDR program rather than conceiving it as a foreign imposed program. As mentioned before, residents in remote areas did not have a chance to engage in reintegration conversation with the DDR officials. Community forums where issues of concern such as stigma attached to female ex-combatants could be discussed, local security, and reconciliation, would have helped. The ability of local communities to forgive the ex-combatants and regard them as legitimate members is a precondition for the success of DDR program,⁴⁴ yet this does not seem to have been fully appreciated or systematically included within the South Sudan DDR program.

In addition, local observers and development experts argue that the policy of reintegrating individual ex-combatants rather than the entire suffering returnees and the host communities is perceived as discriminatory since some returnees in the host communities are in reality economically worse off than some ex-combatants. It is argued that the policy is largely

⁴³ HSBA, 2011

⁴⁴ UN/OSAA 2007

unsustainable owing to the fact that it does not empower the community as a whole. In South Sudan, even the community's vulnerable members such as the disabled were not given any assistance; the target of the DDR program was the Special Needs Groups (SNGs) but those linked to the armed forces.⁴⁵ It is normal for vulnerable community members to believe that they have the right to benefit from any public projects in their area. Therefore, the individual approach was viewed as discriminatory.

⁴⁵ Brethfeld, 2010

The Nature of Implementation Environment

The nature of the post conflict environment is one of the key factors that determine the success of peace building initiatives such as DDR of ex-combatants or any weapons- reduction program. The implementation of DDR programs requires a conducive economic and security environment, which is not always the case. Muggah argues that the signing of comprehensive peace agreements do not necessarily guarantee restoration of peace.⁴⁶ He argues that life in the post conflict environments is usually harsh and threatens civilian security sometimes even more than the actual previous armed conflict. In South Sudan for instance, the armed conflict never ended despite the signing of the 2005 CPA. The interim period in which the CPA was supposed to be implemented was marred by grave accusations and counter accusations between the major warring parties, which more often than not culminated in armed confrontations. This was partly attributed to the unresolved border issues, which the CPA left pending. Whereas Sudan accused South Sudan of backing rebels in Kordafan and Darfur, South Sudan accused Sudan of supporting the rebels opposed to the government of South Sudan.

In addition, the government of South Sudan faced severe internal security challenges. The ethnic tensions especially in Jongelei state triggered by land and cattle rustling suffocated the DDR program in many ways. Besides, several armed militias commanded by opportunist army officers and politicians threatened the state's monopoly of the use of force. The proliferation of small and light weapons only exacerbated the tensions. One of the major security challenges the new state will grapple with for the next decade is the disarmament of both civilians and ex-combatants. Therefore, rather than concentrating on DDR and other priority developmental programs, the government of South Sudan was preoccupied with counteracting Sudan's invasion and other numerous internal security challenges. The resulting humanitarian catastrophe increased number of IDPs fleeing Sudan's bombardments especially in the hotly contested border regions. In 2009, the disarmament exercise was stalled because the tensions were too high.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is arguable that the DDR exercise was never conducted in a conducive environment

⁴⁶ Muggah 2005

⁴⁷ SSDDRC and UNDP, 2006; Brethfeld, 2010

False Assumptions

Available evidence indicates that the DDR program was conducted hurriedly without carrying out a satisfactory baseline study that would expose challenges and expectations of ex-combatants and inform the practitioners on who, what, how, and when the best course of action should be taken to appropriately address the specific needs of different communities. Consequently, a number of assumptions were made. For instance, the architects of the DDR program grossly presumed that ex-combatants would easily access land, which was not the case. On face value, a glimpse at millions of vacant chunks of land might erroneously convince observers that the country has idle land given its low population density.⁴⁸ Emerging evidence, however, reveals that most of this land is increasingly being leased out to gigantic multinational companies. This partly explains why land evictions involving foreign firms have been at the centre of land debates in the recent past.⁴⁹

It was also assumed that ex-combatants would contentedly return to their homeland ignoring the fact that most of them were actually not interested in living in remote areas for fear of the horrible standards of living marred by depressing medical services, impassable roads, lack of water, physical and food insecurity to mention but a few. Nonetheless, the ex-combatants who preferred to stay in towns faced almost the same challenges. In Juba for example, they stayed in dilapidated shelters, lacked basic modern health care and most of them were jobless. Another grave assumption was that the host communities would warmly welcome the ex-combatants, give them land and integrate them, which was not the case. On some occasions, the reverse was true. Some ex-combatants faced stiff resistance from certain individuals who wanted to grab their land. Others could not return home for fear of being lynched due to their past atrocities.⁵⁰ Had DDR program designers and implementers carried out a feasibility study, they might have discovered all this and perhaps taken the right course of action.

⁴⁸ Brethfeld, 2010; National Development Plan, 2012-2013

⁴⁹ Pantuliano, 2007; Mittal, and Mousseau, 2011

⁵⁰ Hugo de Vries and Wiegink, 2011

Respondents' Recommendations

When the respondents were asked to propose solutions, seven broad categories of solutions were mentioned which included the following:

- Review of barriers to land access such as customary norms and practices to enable women and non-community members to access community land in states other than their home-states;
- Allocation of government land to landless ex-combatants;
- Provision of free or subsidized house-construction materials to ex-combatants without houses;
- Creation of a loan scheme for all ex-combatants;
- Helping ex-combatants to access employment opportunities;
- Provision of pension and a reasonable retirement package to ex-combatants;
- Provision of free health and education services for ex-combatants.

Interview data revealed that most respondents were unhappy with barriers to land access such as customary norms and practices of land access, which restricted access to land for women and single or minor males. Actually, it was suggested that there should be a review of customary land access norms. Also, it was recommended that the Land Act and the constitutional stance on land should be upheld: the Land Act allows women to own land, and the Constitution allows every South Sudanese to buy or own land and live in any part of the country.

Similarly, most ex-combatants expressed indignation at GOSS's perceived neglect of ex-combatants in spite of the latter's immense contribution to the liberation war, and they reiterated the need for GOSS to intervene, especially in cases where ex-combatants are evicted from land which they helped to liberate. As Paul (not his real name) explained:

I lost my leg during the war, but when I returned home I found that my land had been grabbed. The authorities did not help me to regain it, and that is why I returned to

*Newsite camp where am depending on well-wishers, especially my former colleagues in SPLA*⁵¹

Paul's account was later supported by that of a key informant, who said:

*“Ex-combatants, like other returnees, were often illegally evicted from their land or from public or private land without due process. This forced many of the evictees to relocate to informal settlements on the outskirts of the town where they would build small huts locally known as Tokuls. These are small grass-thatched houses that accommodate a family of up to eight people which is in contradiction of health standards”*⁵²

Similarly, many respondents expressed the need to help ex-combatants access better and affordable houses through a housing scheme that would enable them to access free houses or at least subsidized construction materials such as iron sheets or cement. This particular proposal may be partly attributable to the very high cost of construction materials that are imported mainly from Kampala in Uganda, and sometimes from as far away as Nairobi in Kenya. A loan scheme was also proposed. This would enable them to participate in business and economic production favourably. Ostensibly, they were reacting to the near absence of micro-credit facilities in the country, and the virtual impossibility of an average ex-combatant accessing a bank loan on account of the need for collateral security and the very high prevailing interest rates by the few banks that exist. This largely explains why only approximately 1% of South Sudanese own a bank account.⁵³

Besides, respondents in the Focus Group Discussion (FDG)⁵⁴ insisted that they needed to be helped to access jobs in the highly competitive job market that is full of skilled and experienced Ugandans, Kenyans and Ethiopians. An interview with a key informant further revealed that despite the vocational training they received in the DDR programme, most ex-combatants still lacked the knowledge and skills necessary to compete favourably in the job market. The same key informant said that most ex-combatants did not even complete their vocational training, and that even some of those who did, were too illiterate, too old or too preoccupied with other home responsibilities and insecurity to benefit fully from the training.⁵⁵ Moreover, as indicated in Table

⁵¹ Interview with male ex-combatant-Paul (not his real name), 4 March 2013, *at New Site camp*

⁵² Interview with key informant 28th February, 2013

⁵³ Lamb, 2009

⁵⁴ Focus Group Discussion, 22nd February, 2013

⁵⁵ Interview with CES-DDR Commission official 19th February, 2013.

1 above, there was a big gap between demobilization and reintegration; a mere 6,546 out of the 12,525 combatants that were demobilized got the reintegration package.⁵⁶

Furthermore, another key informant recommended that in order to enable ex-combatants to acquire skills and jobs, vocational training should take a bit longer. He reported that, in South Sudan, vocational training in carpentry, electrical engineering and IT skills, took less than three months; and yet, ideally, such courses should take at least 6 months. He blamed all these shortcomings on UNDP, and asserted that, rather than channeling the money to improve vocational training of ex-combatants, the UNDP spent enormous sums of money on non-essentials.⁵⁷

Indeed, two years down the road, most ex-combatants were still suggesting that, to ease their reintegration, the government should give them their retirement package and a pension. Moreover, the few who had received their reintegration package pointed out that it was inadequate in that it did not address some basic needs, such as land, housing, medical care and education for their children. In the words of one interviewee, “GoSS *promised us a lot, but they have not fulfilled their promises.*”⁵⁸

All the solutions proposed, revolved around improving social services for ex-combatants as part of the reintegration process to enable them to meet their basic needs. For example, they pointed out that the entire Newsite Camp has only one primary school and one clinic, which doubles as a drug store and sells drugs at prices the ex-combatants can hardly afford. Consequently, many of the children in the camp did not attend school, a fact the researcher was able to observe; and the average ex-combatant cannot afford medication when he or she needs it.

⁵⁶ Sudan DDR Monthly Newsletter May/June 2011

⁵⁷ Interview with South Sudan DDR commission official 20 February 2013

⁵⁸ Interview: 28th February, 2013

Conclusion

The CPA-DDR program would not have scored dismally had the CPA-craftsmen and subsequent planners paused to consider the contextual realities on the ground. The UNICEF, UNIMISS and UNDP⁵⁹ largely controlled the implementation phase with little influence from the government, which was theoretically the major stakeholder. Although some government officials were aware of the need to take ownership of the program, they had no real means to alter the status quo because they were financially weak. They struggled even to keep the DDR Commission activities running. Consequently, tensions escalated and by time the first phase ended, the government was considering not renewing the UNDP's contract for the second phase of the DDR program unless they revised their approach.

The standard DDR template needed to be amended in South Sudan to suit the local conditions especially the specific needs of ex-combatants. It was evident that the situation in the South was completely different to that of the North. Yet the reintegration package was the same across the board - ignoring the fact that ex-combatants in the South were economically worse than their counterparts in the North. The decades of the liberation war destroyed the social fabric, infrastructure and the general economy to the extent that South Soudan had to rely on the East African neighbours for close to 90 percent of food and other essentials. The ex-combatants felt a sense of apathy, neglect, despondence and redundancy due to lack of economic opportunities. Given that they liberated the country from subjugation by the North, they expected a lot from their government in the form of pecuniary compensation or “monetary-thank you”.

Out of economic frustration, the ex-combatants fell prey to militia groups who promised them economic fortunes after overthrowing the constitutional government. Worse still, the post-CPA armed insurgents frustrated the oil production, which further suffocated generation of revenues that would sustain the DDR activities. As noted before, the December 2013 armed conflict, which the president dubbed the foiled coup attempt marked the zenith of frustration arising from politicians, serving soldiers and ex-combatants.⁶⁰ The nascent government needed to fast track the issue of economic and political reforms to pre-empt potential frustrations among the citizenry. The Riek Machar led rebellion was popular among certain sections of the public

⁵⁹ Whereas the UNICEF was in charge of reintegration of children-ex-combatants, the UNMISS and UNDP were in charge of demobilization and reintegration of adult ex-combatants respectively

⁶⁰ Reeves Eric, 2013

because of lack of service delivery, neglect of ex-combatants and inadequate security sector reform. Fundamentally, political will and resource allocation was essential for the broader security sector reform programme in which the DDR of ex-combatants would be comprehensively addressed. This might have put the country on the right track, and possibly, the current rebellion led by Riek Machar might not have surfaced.

Going forward, the issue of ex-combatants remains critical as thousands remain without reintegration and instead they are roaming in towns waiting for government rescue. They undeniably cause insecurity to the citizenry and the viability of the state. Therefore, the government and other partners need to view DDR from the perspective of general security; including civilian disarmament and cattle rustling. Furthermore, the second phase of the DDR program, which has been postponed several times since 2012, needs to emphasize the specific needs of ex-combatants. These include special review of barriers to land access such as customary norms and practices to enable women ex-combatants access to land as they are mostly family heads; general allocation of government land to landless ex-combatants regardless of their state of origin; provision of free or subsidized house-construction materials to ex-combatants without houses; creation of a loan scheme for all ex-combatants; provision of free health and education to ex-combatants and their children; and a special health care package for war heroes and heroines among others.

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