Under the auspices of the Peace and Security Department of the African Union, government delegations from Sudan and South Sudan held a workshop and meeting to exchange information, lessons learned and best practices, with an objective of exploring opportunities for cross-border cooperation and mechanisms within community security/peace building, small arms and DDR programmes. The delegation included representative representatives from the DDR Commissions, CSAC Department (Sudan) and CSSAC Bureau (South Sudan), National Peace Commission (South Sudan), Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, National Security. In addition, international and regional partners that included the United Nations (UNDP, UNMISS, UN-OAU), Bon International Conversion Center (BICC), World Bank, African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Regional Center for Small Arms (RECSA) and international partners (Germany and EU) also participated in the workshop.

The meeting was the first time that the two governments met at a technical level on these issues since the separation of South Sudan, on 8 July 2011. This meeting was made possible after the meeting of the President’s of Sudan and South Sudan, in Juba, on 13 October 2013, where they renewed their commitment to further develop security and economic arrangements between the two countries within the framework of the Cooperation Agreements which were signed on 27 September 2012. As such, during the meeting, the two delegations specifically identified the following topics as areas of mutual interest: community security particularly among bordering communities; Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs); DDR; and Peace building amongst neighboring communities.
Both parties have agreed to coordinate on these topics including: sharing of information to increase effectiveness, strengthen cooperation and build confidence among the institutions involved. It was agreed upon and the joint communiqué was signed in Addis, on 7 November 2013. The delegations furthermore expressed their intent to work towards future cooperation in the fields of CSAC and DDR, in particular, they will consider establishing coordination and follow-up mechanisms that will allow the respective institutions to benefit from more intensive cooperation.

The discussions focused on bordering communities on both the sides and both the parties recognize the need to support these communities to live in peace and harmony not only for stability of these communities but for the sub region as a whole. The parties also recognize the need for such cooperation in the spirit of the dialogue between both of the Presidents. Both the parties have appealed to the international community and their respective partners to support these initiatives technically and financially, in order to promote stability in the region. A follow-up meeting that builds on the positive spirit had been agreed by the beginning of 2014 and to that effect the delegations nominated three members from each side to keep the momentum and draft a framework for discussions. Meanwhile, both sides will continue to implement projects like CSAC within their mandate in priority areas including the borders.

**Community Security and Peace Building**

On community security and peace building, both delegations expressed the need of addressing community security for the benefit of peace, stability, and development in their respective countries and especially in the border areas. Delegations also further discussed the element of peace building and were open to dialogue on this issue. However, they opted to leave future discussions this particular issue.

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Sudan and South Sudan heads of delegation sign “Communiqué” expressing interest to explore opportunities for technical cooperation on their relevant mandates.
Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)

Extensive presentations were given on DDR experiences from both countries. Interestingly, both delegations agreed on the need to explore coordination and sharing of information as both recognized that international partners have had reservations on DDR. In this regard, GoS and GoSS felt the need to find opportunities for cooperation in order to bring back the confidence of international community and that they support with resources the programme.

Outcome of Meeting

Both government delegations agreed to issue a communiqué highlighting the subjects of mutual interest for technical cooperation which are also in line with Cooperation Agreements signed between their governments. Explicitly, these were on Community Security including peace building particularly among the bordering communities, Small Arms Control and DDR. While a broad range of topics were discussed to explore the opportunities for the cooperation, delegations agreed that upon return to their respective countries, they will further deliberate at the highest level on the way forward for a follow-up mechanism and a framework. In the interim, they agreed to nominate three representatives on each side to maintain the momentum and to formulate a draft framework for taking forward the cooperation in the above mentioned topics. International partners viewed the communiqué to be a very positive step in the right direction and were keen to see the initiative move forward.

Partnerships for Change: UNDP/UNAMID Joint Efforts, in Darfur

In order to maximize impact, enhance sustainability and reduce duplication of efforts, UNDP and UNAMID joined hands in Darfur for stabilizing communities and creating livelihoods for unemployed and youth at risk through UNDP CSAC component and UNAMID CLIPs (Community Based Labor Intensive Projects). The work has started in four states of Darfur starting from Kulbus, a bordering community to Chad all the way to Geraida locality in South Darfur to Kawkabiya in North Darfur and Umdukun in Central Darfur. For instance in Geraida locality, UNAMID implements a soft component comprised of conflict resolution, income generation and small business management, where as UNDP is training unemployed youth in making of soil stabilized bricks (SSB), which in turn are used to construct a school/community centre aiming at not only engaging children of communities in conflict but also engaging adults in the communities to use the establishment for peace building, conflict resolution and community activities.

In addition, UNDP also joined hands with BICC (Bonn International Centre for Conversion) and UNAMID in supporting the efforts of the Ministry of Interior and the state government for voluntary registration of small weapons. The approach focuses on graduated small arms control including elements like sensitization, encouraging communities to register the weapons, creating weapons free zones among others. Though the actual activities started in August 2013, till date around 1,000 weapons have been registered in West Darfur, which is a tangible positive change of perception among the communities. However, many communities are cautious and require a lot of sensitization.
Learning the ‘Tools’ for Success: Youth Vocational Training in Mechanics and Carpentry, in Blue Nile State

Sudan’s years of conflict and turmoil have resulted in high levels of violence. This has also led to large numbers of unemployed youth and community members resorting to armed violence as a way of life. Many of these youth have not been able to attend school as they opted to clean weaponry in order to earn incomes and support their family. The lack of opportunities and alternative livelihoods has created a precedent for the future generations of rural Sudanese youth.

Through UNDP’s Community Security and Arms Control (CSAC) programme and the support of JICA, youth with conflict carrying capacities are able to explore other viable alternatives to engaging in conflict for a living. 26 year old Tarig Ibrahim Afandina, a beneficiary of the CSAC youth vocational training in mechanics from Blue Nile State explained “...before I became part of the CSAC programme I was just a workshop boy... I could only fix bicycle tires.”

Before the conflict broke out, Tarig worked in agriculture; sheep rearing projects. Everything changed when Tarig and others in Menza – and surrounding communities – were brought together to join the Democratic National Alliance before the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Once the signing of the peace agreement took place; one with no security contract, Tarig along with 1000 others, were left to take care of themselves and were left out of the DDR process.

Tarig found his way; however, with support from the Sudan DDR Commission and enrolled in the youth vocational training programme. Tarig, along with 25 other youth, was given the opportunity to participate in a vocational training programme, in either carpentry or mechanics. Participants, like Tarig, were later given a chance to apply for a start up loan of 8,000 SDG each, with a 2% interest rate, through the Social Development Fund. The loan’s purpose is to purchase spare parts and sell them to repay their installment as well as the 2% interest. After the vocational training, Tarig expressed that “...the most beneficial part of the training was in mechanic engine repair because I was able to find myself in it.”

Graduates from the vocational training not only received approximately 315 hours of training in their selected livelihood but others, like Tarig, are now contributing members of their community. Tarig remarks that “after only two months of being in business we earn 30 to 40 SDG per day and thus, we are encouraged.”

Five members of the graduating class have collaborated efforts and have established a shop in the main Roseries market. They are now positively perceived by community
members and have developed a good reputation for their hard work.

Furthermore, Tarig has been able to successfully pay his loan installments on time as well as earn an income in order to support his new child and family.

The success that Tarig and his five new colleagues are experiencing is possible through CSAC initiatives and effective partnerships such as with JICA. Tarig and his friends are now more able to advocate for peace, based on their experiences and sustainable livelihood opportunities through the CSAC projects.

Livelihoods Case Study: Sheep Rearing in North Kordofan

The use of innovative forms of creating livelihoods using instruments like micro-finance and micro-insurance and linkage to pro-poor value chains have yielded results in North Kordofan State; pulling two community groups out of poverty and rendering sustainability to the sheep rearing initiative. The initiative thrived on account of an effective partnership between the Ministry of Animal Resources of the State Government, SDDRC, UNDP, VetCare, Roots Corporation which supplied water and SDRC micro-finance.

To date, both the groups have paid back their two loan installments and started expanding the operation. More civilian community members also joined the initiative with their own investments seeing the venture viable.

Building Livelihoods: The Story of Mohamed Altayib Ismaeel, Roseries, Blue Nile State

Mohamed Altayib Ismaeel, 36 years old, was affiliated with the PDF unit. After being demobilized, Mohamed worked together, with his uncle, in a carpentry shop in Roseries – Ganis Sharg, where he gained skills and knowledge on the art of carpentry.

The moment Mohamed – like many others - received their carpentry reintegration assistance from implementing partner, Mubadiroon; he opened a shop, hired one employee and has been able to successfully run his own shop.

Mohamed and his colleague create cupboards and tables, etc. which they sell at the market. They also do special requests.

At the end of the month, Mohamed earns 300 SDG. This income allows him to not only cover his daily living expenses but also provide for his family and send his children to school. With his new found success, Mohamed plans to expand his shop and move into the micro industrial market.
Community Security: Promoting Peace Building and Enhancing Sustainable Development in South Kordofan

Water yard construction in Dilling locality, South Kordofan State, is one of UNDP/DDR Community Security and Arm Control (CSAC) interventions, which was implemented a year ago in coordination with Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC). The water yard project was estimated to benefit around 5,000 community members. It aims to reduce conflict and also ensure peace and stability.

CSAC committee member Mohamed Elbasha remarked, “...the water yard is well functioning, even neighbouring communities benefit a lot from this project. Now, 7,000 community members are direct beneficiaries, including nomads and displaced communities.” CSAC committee members manage to arrange a levy paid by the beneficiaries from neighboring communities; the pastoralists and communities that focus on animal rearing. These contributions are then utilized by the CSAC committee to maintain the water yard and to support community development activities in the area. Currently, 45% of the monthly payments have been used in the rehabilitation of the youth club, community health centre, women and adult education centre and in establishing a new nursery.

The water yard now helps to mitigate conflict over the scarcity of water among the neighboring communities by ensuring an organized and stable water supply as well as enhance community development activities.

El Bashra commented that, “...this project not only benefited the community in bridging the water shortage gap, it also helped to develop better relations with the neighboring communities and support peaceful co-existence.” He added, “…the initiative was fruitful as it provided a new source of money to fund our community development initiatives.”

Badya has supported and carried out the social [soft] component of the programme, at the community level. This component included: training on peace, conflict resolution skills as well as gender and water resource management. Ahamed Abuhoum, project coordinator of Badya, expressed, “…the community is witnessing a real development experience.

The project helped a lot in reducing tensions; moreover, it’s playing a vital role in supporting education, women’s empowerment and community development, in general.” He adds, “Establishing a kindergarten in the community helped by providing pre-school education for 170 children. There are also 55 women who are receiving literacy training and the number is expected to increase.”
Peaceful Beginnings in Al Maarka, North Kordofan

In a move aimed at dealing with the security challenges facing the community of Al Maarka the Umda approved the establishment of a Community Security and Arms Control (CSAC) committee to bring people together and collectively enhance the security and development of the community. The first order of business was to stem the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW); most often the prime cause creating insecurity and instability within the region.

Asim Hassan Mohamed, 32 years old and member of the CSAC committee remembers when UNDP and national implementing partner (IP), Al Takamu first arrived at Al Maarka. “We had a funeral at that time, a young boy of 14 lost his life due to firing in a celebration.”

Al Maarka is located in Wadbanda locality in North Kordofan, a border community bordering north Darfur. The proximity to the Darfur conflict and fear for their safety was the main motive behind the owning of weapons. With time, arms became a part of the culture, and firing was a part of the celebration. People fire hundreds of shots at weddings, three at the birth of a son, one in the case of a daughter and several for various other occasions. UNDP engages communities in peace building efforts. To Al Maarka community this was centralized around SALW.

Not long after their arrival, Takamul organization conducted a sensitization campaign on the dangers of SALW. The campaign addressed the dangers of carrying weapons and how, in times of need, it should be regulated.

This also included being trained on the use of arms to avoid accidents. Nazik Bushra, Takamul IP project manager recalls “...sometimes you wonder how much change you can instigate, until you see it.” In her opinion Al Maarka was special because it was a community that was stringent about arms yet they were also open to discussion and welcomed suggestions.

“I felt enlightened by the messages, I discovered that there was so much that I didn’t know, so much that I wasn’t aware of and so much that can be done,” expressed Asim.

The impact of these messages reverberated across community leaders and in light of this, the Umda initiated a CSAC committee comprising of representatives of the youth, women and men. The committee was tasked to address several challenges in the community such as gender, conflict resolution and the proliferation of small arms as a priority.
Coming Home: CSAC Support to South Sudan Returnees

In the midst of the ever-changing and challenging Sudanese landscape is the El Salam locality; tucked away in the Southern part of White Nile State and bordering South Sudan. This locality, after the separation of South Sudan, became a mere ghost town until returnees started to flock back to their homes, within El Salam. Upon return to El Salam, returnees found that their agricultural schemes, homes and shops had been lost along with any pre-existing basic services. Furthermore, due to high levels of illiteracy and no skills training, returnees also found themselves without opportunities for employment.

It was not until after an assessment had been completed that action started to be taken. To date, work has been done to assist communities, in El Salam locality, via: economic activities, CSAC interventions and supporting community committees. This can be seen in the case of the Dabkaria fishery. During CSAC interventions, the team conducted focus group discussions whereby it was agreed to support with a fishery project due to the fact that many had pre-existing experience, from their time in South Sudan. The project was registered as a co-operative and included 51 members including both XCs and youth civilians. Not only were XCs and youth benefiting but women's groups also became direct beneficiaries via processing and selling small fish, in the markets.

Building Up Capacities for Stabilization Approach

After nearly four years of individual economic reintegration support to demobilized ex-combatants, in South Kordofan State (SKS), a new approach to the reintegration process – SKS pilot projects - has launched its first-ever capacity building training, in November 2013. The training targeted the Community Management Committee (CMC), in Kadugli and is part of a series of capacity building trainings lined up.

33 CMC members - of which, ten were females - benefited from the training which was organized by UNDP through NGO partners MAMAN and ABRAR. The training covered important themes such as: peace-building, natural resource management, leadership skills, women’s participation in development and conflict resolution. The inclusion and involvement of state line ministries, has paved the way to create awareness of pilot projects amongst local authorities while deepening their sense of ownership and participation in this new approach to economic reintegration. The training is a milestone achievement to the pilot projects, which instils excitement among many community members in Kadugli, as revealed in an interview with one of the trainees. El Khatma Rahal Musa, 20 years old, claims “Today, my perception about the DDR programme has changed.”

El Khatma is a CMC member who has benefited from the training. “I was one of those who felt uncomfortable about providing support to ex-combatants, yet we live and share our resources with them in our community,” El Khatma continued.

In the village of El Saraf Elahamer, Kadugli, the new approach taken by DDR has injected a sense of social cohesion and common belonging throughout the community. El Khatma – like many others who participate in the CMC – maintains “…my role is to ensure that I contribute meaningfully to all development programmes coming to the community and to ensure the right people benefit from such interventions without bias.

This training has earned me a lot of knowledge in leadership and in how to manage community resources. I will utilize the knowledge gained from this training to consolidate my participation in the CMC and to fully benefit my community. I thank the State DDR Commission and UNDP for the pilot projects, which views the community as one entity.”
Women’s group engages in discussion over leadership skills training. Photo credit: Zeinab Organization.

Social and Economic Stability: Establishing Women’s Associations in Sudan

On 10 October, 2013, UNDP DDR’s gender unit, in collaboration with Sudan Disarmament and Demobilization Commission (SDDRC) and Zainab, conducted a series of training workshops for 50 women participants who represented both ex-combatants and civilians, from rural areas of Central Sector. Women participated in the training for 6 days. During the training period, women were equipped with skills in: leadership, proposal writing, saving and loans, small business, microfinance management, reporting and fundraising.

Participants of the women’s association were established by Zainab, in 2012. The initiative came from the women themselves to formulate this group. 45 of the participants are ex-combatants; most of the them were involved in economic reintegration projects before and were recently a part of One Man Can and gender outreach programmes, as carried out by Zainab, in Khartoum. Zainab managed to register and link this association with the Ministry of Social Welfare in order to link the association under the ministry umbrella and enable women to access linkages provided by the ministries and to ensure the sustainability of the associations activities.

Safia, from Zainab said, “We encourage women’s initiatives. Now, all factors which promote sustainability exist in order to move the association forward and build capacity. The women are linked with the Ministry of Social Welfare and also with the Womens Union.” Safia added, “There are many opportunities available for the women’s group to utilize such as government microfinance for small businesses. This is just one example of many other trainings and capacity building programs.”

Currently, the new women’s association is able to rent an office to run and begin their activities. For now, the association will continue coordinating with Zainab.

Nagawa Gasimallah, head of the association remarked, “It’s just a beginning. Soon more women’s groups made up of both civilians and ex-combatants will join the associations activities. Our links with the Ministry of Social Welfare will help us a lot. Currently, an opportunity has become available for our members to join another vocational training on food processing and sewing. This training will be organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare.” She further commented that “...the availability of government microfinance is an encouraging opportunity which will be utilized by our new and existing members. We are ready to make use of all of the training that is provided to us and more.”

The association is still in beginning stages, but the ways are being paved for on-coming projects and activities. This initiative is expected to benefit a large number of women, both socially and economically, in rural areas of the Central Sector.
Moving Forward….  

A lot of ground has been covered across Sudan—starting in East Sudan then through the former Protocol Areas and into Darfur. Countless community consultations and M&E activities have occurred and in the process, the DDR programme is transitioning based on these lessons that have been learned and the experience of livelihoods from DDR and CSAC components.

Based on the evidence from the communities and context, an integrated stabilization approach is being launched targeting approximately 90 communities in the states of Southern Kordofan, Western Kordofan, Sennar, Northern Kordofan, Blue Nile and White Nile states, throughout the former protocol areas. The goal is to stabilize socially and economically target communities which are both accessible and at risk of being drawn into conflict.

One of the major targets for the integrated stabilization approach is to link recent discussions between Sudan and South Sudan and address cross border cooperation on Community Security, Livelihoods, SALW and peaceful co-existence of bordering communities.

“Ms. Yvonne Helle (center), the new Country Director of UNDP Sudan engages with the DDR and CSAC team on the challenges and way forward”. Photo credit: Afra Osman, UNDP