

A tale of two successful ex-combatants

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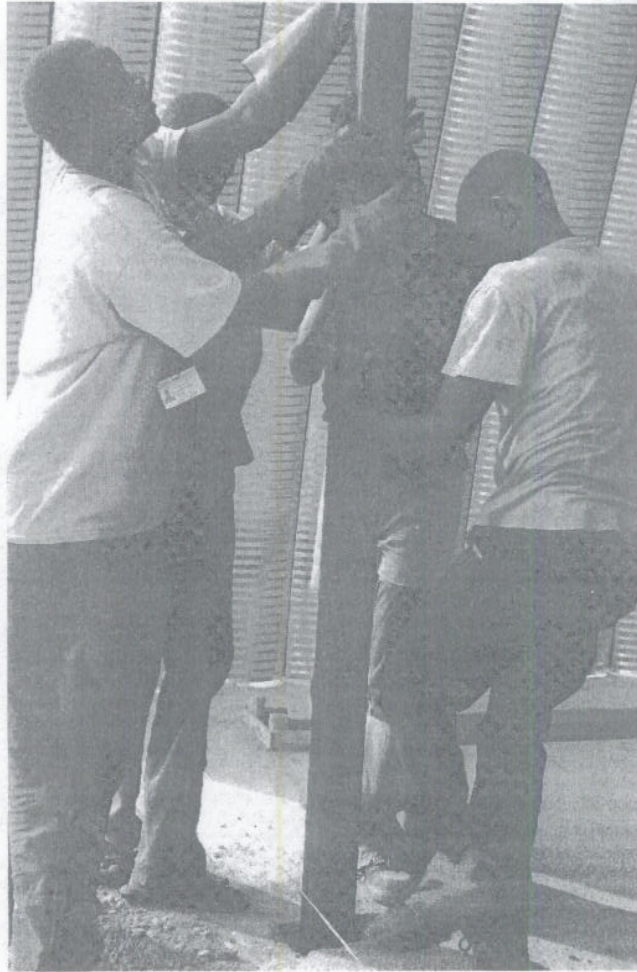
Yugusuk Silver Yoni never thought he would be able to fend for his family. His only perceived livelihood, the gun had been taken away from him. He had been demobilised from the SPLA as part of the DDR programme and was now supposed to rejoin society as a civilian. That was one year ago. Today, Yugusuk boasts of the income that he earns from his employer UNMIS, thanks to the training he received through the Japan International cooperation Agent (JICA) as part of his reintegration package in the DDR programme, he secured employment and is now able to use his salary to finance his children's education and to take care of his family's daily needs.

Yugusuk received his training in welding and metal works through the DDR programme. After he had chosen his livelihood option, the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC) supported by UNDP and other partners, arranged for him to be trained at the Swedish Free Mission Training Centre in Juba. After attending the three months course, Yugusuk a natural entrepreneur went back home and started cultivating vegetables, together with his wife, they sold the excess stock they grew in the nearby market and used the small profit they made to provide for their family.

Before joining the DDR training, Yugusuk and his family survived on his meagre savings, the three months food ratio and 860 SDG given to him as part of his reinsertion package, as time passed this could not sustain them and it became increasingly difficult to finance all the needs of his family. Particularly as the cost of living continued to rise. "I felt terrible whenever I watched my wife making local beer and taking it to market for sale so that she could supplement our income. Tears would roll down my face, as I recalled the time when I was working and earning as a soldier" Yugusuk recounts his agony.

As part of Yugusuk's follow up support in the DDR programme, the SSDDRC and UNDP approached him in July 2010 to see whether he would like to use his welding skills learnt in DDR with his employment at the new UNMIS construction site in Jebel. He is now proud of his work "Am a proud father and husband thanks to UNDP, I can provide for my family and my wife, this had proved impossible before" Yugusuk says, adding that his family had gone through terrible moments in life when he was unemployed. Yugusuk says that the endurance and resilience that his family had shown through the trying moments had paid off as right now, he is able to provide for them.

Yugusuk joined the SPLA in 1992 and worked in the infantry were guns and bullets were his best companions. He was later promoted to the rank of Major and he felt increasingly proud of the work he



was doing. Life took a turning point when he was demobilised in 2009 at the age of 39. This is when he began to reflect on the challenges of his future survival and that of his family. But that is all in the past as he now earns 45 SDGs per day worked and with that he is able to provide for his four children. With proper planning and budgeting, a thing he learnt during the training, he is also able to support some of his relatives.

Currently Yugusuk is planning to use some of his savings from the construction work to build a good house for his family. he has already bought 24 iron sheets and hopes to start construction next year.

Just like Yugusuk, Marko Oromo Ogwat was demobilised in 2009 and attained training in welding, at the Swedish free mission. After the training, UNDP facilitated him to find employment at the UNMIS construction site, with his earnings from the construction work, he has put up a small business which is managed by his five wives. Profits from the business are used for maintaining the home and buying food, "Our livelihood is improving and at least now my children can have decent meals and I can think of de-

veloping my family further. I am a happy man now" said Marko.

Marko is husband to five women and father to 35 children. Every mother had to work hard to provide food and school fees for her children, According to Marko he had become another child to his wives as they had to provide for him as well. All Marko's wives were involved in brewing alcohol and selling vegetables and other assorted goods. This is how they were able to raise money to feed their children. During the training it was very difficult for Marko to cope. He could not afford food for himself and his family. Transportation to the training venue was also a problem "I had to start walking very early so that I could reach in time, it reached a point when I almost gave up but my friends' personal stories and experiences about difficulties in life gave me the courage to move on" said Marko.

According to Marko, the most embarrassing situation was when he came home and found his children complaining of hunger, it was his responsibility to provide for his family but instead he was crying to his family to provide for him, "Everyday I came back from the training

to find my family crying of hunger, I was angry with myself, I wondered why me" Marko got involved in burning charcoal as a way to raise income to supplement the income from his wives so that he could at least contribute some money to buy some food for his large family.

Every day after the training, on an empty stomach Marko would go and log trees out of which he burn charcoal that he would pack in sacks ready for sale. When the charcoal did not fetch enough, he added firewood to the collection; he would tie up bundles of wood and bring it to the main road for sale. This helped him to raise some little money to afford a day's meal for his family, but his family still survived on just one meal each day. Marko says the charcoal burning business was not very profitable and required a lot of energy, sometimes he could even fall sick and fail to work, but he still had the responsibility of taking care of his family. He had to have the endurance to move on despite all the hardships.

When the UNDP facilitated him to find job at the UNMIS, he was very thankful and his gratitude was exhibited in his hard work. When he started working at UNMIS, life got better for him and his family. He also earns 45 SDGs per day worked and with this he is able to supplement his family's income. He has also bought 19 iron sheets and hopes to construct a decent home for his wives and children after the referendum "things have gotten better now, my children come back from school and find food ready, my wives don't have to work very hard, since I can provide for them" said Marko.

Like many ex-combatants, Yugusuk and Marko at the beginning perceived the DDR to be a program which robbed and denied them their livelihoods. This perception changed as they started working and sustaining their families.

According to Marko, the program has helped him to identify his hidden talents. "I enjoy my welding work, I couldn't have had the opportunity to learn and practise such interesting skills if I had not followed the reintegration programme" says Marko. To him demobilisation is like closing one door and opening the other. According to both Yugusuk and Marko, one has to be strong, courageous and determined to be able to attend all the trainings and start up with the minimum start up kits provided.

The DDR programme was launched in Southern Sudan in June 2009 to facilitate the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants. The programme is implemented by the government of Southern Sudan through the Southern Sudan disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration commission (SSDDRC). The SSDDRC works with UNDP as a lead agency providing technical assistance on the reintegration component of the programme.