

DDR Commission prepares new policy framework for South Sudan

By Julius N. Uma

March 26, 2011 (JUBA) – The Southern Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC) has embarked on preparing the new policy guidelines meant for the second phase of the program, its chairperson said Friday.

According to William Deng Deng, the new policy outline is being developed by a technical committee 10 senior officers drawn from both SSDDRC and South Sudan's army (SPLA).

"The technical committee started its work of preparing this policy outline about three weeks ago. Once they are done, it will be presented to the cabinet for approval. We expect it to be ready at least before July 09," the SSDDRC Chairperson told a press conference in the South Sudan capital, Juba.

South Sudan will become independent in July following a referendum in favour of secession in January. The plebiscite was agreed as part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which ended decades of civil war.

The current DDR program was an integral part of the CPA, designed for one country and two systems. The first phase of the program, which started in June 2009, initially targeted approximately 34,000 special needs groups such as the elderly, former combatants and women associated with armed forces.

Already, a total of 11,944 DDR participants had been demobilized as of mid-March in selected South Sudan states of Central Equatoria, Lakes, Western Bahr El-Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria according to the commission.

"The next phase of the program, which is expected to begin after South Sudan's independence declaration, will mainly focus on disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating active SPLA soldiers," Deng said.

In a related development, the SSDDRC received 15 laptops and two printers courtesy of a generous contribution from one of its implementing partners, International Organization for Migration (IOM).

While handing over the brand new equipments, Gerry Waite, head of IOM South Sudan reiterated the organization's continued support to SSDDRC, saying the donation will boost the commission's efforts in serving the community as it prepares for its next phase.

"IOM has been honored to work alongside the commission in this endeavor, and as the SSDDRC prepares to launch the new phase of the DDR programme in the coming months, we hope this contribution of laptops and printers will provide some support to the tremendous effort that the commission puts in every day," Waite said.

An implementing partner of SSDDRC since July 2010, working in greater Bahr el Ghazal, the IOM has reportedly supported the DDR process for over 4,500 former combatants and says it has begun assisting nearly 2,600 individuals in their reintegration process.

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