

THE PIONEER

"Issue 16 Vol 002"

DDR Programme Plays Vital Role in Socio-economic Development of South Sudan

The new Nation of South Sudan does not only need a flag, a national anthem, or an emblem, it also needs set priorities for socio-economic development. In this context, goals should be, amongst others, an increased gross domestic product (GDP), enhanced social inclusion, increased regional competitiveness and to improve literacy, personal safety as well as the level of participation in civil society. These indicators of a progressive society will be accelerated by



socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants. The South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC) contributes to social and economic development by ensuring that ex-combatants secure sustainable livelihoods through non-military means; assisting ex-combatants to resettle in post-war communities; sensitizing ex-combatants to adjust their war-time attitudes and expectations and helping them become parts of the political decision-making process. SSDDRC will help 150,000 ex-combatants (indirectly also their families) to secure their living, which promotes stability and security in the country that in the end helps to boost economic activities.

By William Deng Deng
Chairperson, SSDDRC

Although July 9th 2011 marked the end of the armed struggle against colonialism and oppression in South Sudan, the nation building struggle still rages on. There is urgent need to liberate the country from poverty and ensure socio-economic development for all South Sudanese. The majority of the people in South Sudan require vocational training which will prepare them to live a self-reliant life in the future. The DDR Commission supports ex-combatants to acquire such livelihood skills. Having qualified South Sudan citizens in the workforce will reduce capital flights (when assets and/or money rapidly flow out of the country) and change the war of liberation to 'war of development'. Well-trained ex-combatants will contribute to South Sudan's human capital - stock of competences, knowledge and personal attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic benefits. The 20th and 21st centuries are referred to as 'human capital centuries'. There is a need to have skilled personnel in newfound technology and advanced technical areas of the economy. Due to

the increasing demands for human capital force, many developed countries resort to immigration, dubbed as 'brain drain', in order to get labour resources. South Sudan can invest in education amongst its population especially ex-combatants. Here the DDR programme is in the position to play a critical role.

Apart from offering marketable skills that enhance chances of employment, ex-combatants also learn entrepreneurship; business and financial management that significantly increase the chances of demobilised soldiers to start-up businesses. The employability of ex-combatants does not only secure viable livelihoods but also prevents idleness that may breed violence as well as the creation of an enabling environment for human security and hence, socio-economic development.

By demobilising ex-combatants, the DDR program supports to maintain and promote peace and security in the country, which is a prerequisite for development. Guaranteed security will enable government institutions and individuals to provide services - education, health, safe water, among others, to the people, and create a conducive environment for foreign and domestic investments leading to an increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) - market value of all final goods and services produced in a country in a given period. Security in the country guarantees personal safety and reduces fear from physical harm of all citizens particularly ex-combatants thus enabling DDR Commission attain one of its specific objectives: assisting ex-combatants to return to civilian life in their host communities (social reintegration).

Social reintegration of ex-combatants to their host communities involves crucial exercises, such as teaching civic education especially on rights and responsibilities of citizenship and national reconciliation – enabling South Sudan to have law abiding citizens and promote peace among different communities. Although our former combatants are heroes and heroines who have brought freedom, there are potential areas of conflict (e.g. land) between the host communities and ex-combatants. Therefore, the DDR Commission offers sensitization programs for host communities to accept former soldiers back with open arms. Settling ex-combatants back in the communities encourages developments in rural areas such as ex-combatants starting up businesses; the Commission constructing green villages (low-cost houses) and building the capacities of local training institutions and schools – SSDDRC is 'taking town to the people', one of the policies of our government. These sensitization programmes will change the mind sets of ex-combatants enabling them to live a new life outside the army.

Former soldiers are used to a very systematic hierarchy regarding distributing information and giving opinions. Ex-combatants are used to "taking orders" and receiving information through the line of command. The SSDDRC's sensitization programme, "demilitarization", makes the transition into new life very easy for ex-combatants. Fully 'civilianized' ex-combatants will more easily abide by the rule of law and respect the political opinion. Proper political reintegration will enable ex-combatants to form a voting bloc. Thus they could influence the political decisions and allow some of them to run for political offices. Therefore, SSDDRC is creating a social and political inclusive society as South Sudan is in the process of establishing stable democracy.

Political, social and economic reintegration through vocational trainings, business management, advance education, literacy skills provided by SSDDRC fill the void left by the widened gap between the expectations and reality among ex-combatants. The former soldiers believed that all their problems would be solved once the country is liberated and most ex-combatants were expecting to be assigned to high offices. Through continual DDR support and orientations, ex-combatants adjust to realities of life and also help them make their new lives as civilians attractive.

Although South Sudan is an independent nation, the social and economic development challenges which lay ahead are enormous. The DDR programme is poised to accelerate socio-economic development of the new nation, which is crucial for regional and international stability as the world has become very small village.