

Ex-combatants are “Agents for Change” A New HIV/AIDS Peer Educator Initiative

After being demobilised from the SPLA, ex-combatants and Women Associated with Armed Forces (WAAF) returning to their communities are perceived by some as a risk to their areas of return, particularly when it comes to the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections such as HIV/AIDS. To fight this stigma, the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme wants to inform the communities that they should both withhold their prejudices and be more aware of preventative methods. With the assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners, the Commission is training some of these men and women to become peer educators on HIV/AIDS prevention, so that they can sensitize their community on how to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS.

Earlier this year Southern Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC), along with UNDP and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), organised “Agents for Change”, training in HIV and AIDS Peer Facilitation in Juba for 16 ex-combatants and community members.

Six months on, one of the graduates of the HIV and AIDS Peer Educator Training Initiative Adam Sadig speaks frankly about how this training has personally affected him,

“I was lucky to have this HIV training and I am happy because I learnt how to take care of myself so that I don’t become a victim, I don’t want to die of AIDS.”

Since the training, Adam Sadig has become a community HIV trainer for this Reintegration phase, he is 34 years old and a resident of Gudele Village in Juba. During his free time, Adam regularly talks to his friends and family about the dangers of contracting the virus and advises them to be faithful to their partners or how to use protective measures. He encourages them to go for counselling and to know their HIV status. “If I continue to share this

information to many people especially in the villages, I will save many young men and women.” Says Adam

In Sudan DDR is a Government-led Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration programme for 90,000 combatants from the SPLA and Women Associated with Armed Forces (WAAF). The Southern Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC) is responsible for leading the DDR process. For Demobilisation UNMIS is the main organisation providing support to the SSDDRC and UNDP provide lead support with Reintegration.

In each state, the Reintegration phase consists of training, and provision of relevant start-up materials to help them to work and providing the DDR participants with follow-up services. Training lasts three months and includes literacy and numeracy skills, and civilian life skills such as child nutrition, Civic Education and how to prevent HIV/AIDS.



Demobilisation is ongoing in most states. In Central Equatoria and Lakes states, the implementing partner German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is providing vocational training and start up materials, such as equipment and tools, for ex-combatants and women associated with armed forces who plan to either go into paid employment or start their own business. UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are providing agricultural/livestock training and start up kits for those who plan on becoming a farmer or running an agricultural related business. Also, In Western and Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrup, UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) are registering DDR participants for all types of Reintegration assistance and training.

By empowering ex-combatants to become “Agents for Change” within their communities, the valuable health information disseminated by them will go some way towards curbing the prevalence of the disease in Southern Sudan.