

Torit demobilization facility to receive upgrading

In assisting ex-combatants to re-enter civilian life, UNMISS will be funding the rehabilitation of a demobilization facility in the Eastern Equatoria State capital of Torit, mission officials said today during a one-day visit to the area.

About \$100,000 would be made available to upgrade the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) facility's infrastructure, according to UNMISS Senior DDR Officer Khaled Moustefa.

Winnie Babihuga, UNMISS State Coordinator for Eastern Equatoria, said the state government planned to develop the current DDR transitional facility into a technical university in future and had requested the UN and other agencies to renovate it.

The UNMISS officials observed ongoing training of ex-combatants at the facility in business skills, information technology, carpentry, tailoring, food processing and agriculture. Some 489 ex-combatants from around the state are attending a three-month life skills training programme, which finishes at the end of March, to assist them smoothly integrate into civilian life.

According to training coordinators, some ex-combatants trained in the first round, which ended four months ago, had found jobs in the private sector or different organizations, including as trainers at the DDR facility. "We have trainers who have been trained here ... in the tailoring and food processing sectors," said Soro Mussa, International Organization for Migration team leader and training coordinator.

Trainees Janet Piro (food processing) and Achol Biu (tailoring) expressed hopes that they would have better lives after the training. Ms. Piro plans to look for employment in hotels to support her relatives and son, who currently lives in Kampala with her brother. Ms. Biu wants to work as a tailor, but would like the government or other agencies help her buy a sewing machine.

UNMISS will be building a new DDR transitional facility in the Eastern Equatoria area of New Kenya (30 kilometres from Torit), where the state government has allocated land for it. Construction on the 1,200 square-meter plot should start at the end of February and finish in April, according to UNMISS DDR Officer Moustefa.

The new DDR facility will be able to train and accommodate 500 ex-soldiers at a time. UNMISS has already begun construction on a second DDR facility in Mapel, Western Bahr El-Ghazal State, and a third is planned for Bor, Jonglei State.