

Unity state: 20 demobilised children re-unite with parents

By Bonifacio Taban Kuich

July 22, 2013 (BENTIU) – At least 20 children, demobilised under the country’s Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration (DDR) program were on Tuesday re-united with their parents.



Most of these children reportedly found comfort in military barracks after fleeing their homes where their parents may have failed to provide them with the basic necessities.

George Gatloi Koang, South Sudan DDR coordinator in the state told Sudan Tribune they handed over the children, majority below 16, to their parents.

He said the children, successfully demobilised from the army barracks last week, will soon be given food and livestock rations for a month, with support from DDR partners.

“When we get out the children from the army, we have some agencies that contribute [toward] assisting the children,” said Koang, citing the Belgium-based VSF and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) as commission’s main partners.

The DDR official, however, said insufficient numbers of vehicles and poor road accessibility remain a major setback in efforts to demobilise children within the military.

Ongiew Ayuol Tipu, who lived in the military barracks for more than two year said lack of parental care prompted him to abandon home for the military facility.

“I decided to stay with the army a year back, because I had nowhere to survive and to continue with my education,” the 13-year old orphan told Sudan Tribune.

He said most of peers often faced with similar situations are forced to abandon their homes and live in barracks.

Hoth Par Puol, 16 said he decided to move to the barrack in order meet his basic needs, including daily feeding.

“What forced me [into the barracks] was because I had nowhere to stay. Some of us lost our parents, and it became hard for us to live with single mums,” said Puol, who has lived in the barracks for three years.

Since May this year, nearly 30 children have reportedly been re-united with their parents, bringing to 60 the numbers who have benefited under the scheme.

The DDR commission says its disarmament program targets up to 300 children who returned as part of the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) rebels that accepted amnesty in Mayom county.