

The Media is the Message: DDR and CSAC Workshops in Darfur

EL Geneina, West Darfur, 20 June 2011- The Sudan DDR Commission (SDDRC) and the UNDP, held the first of three media sensitization workshops in the Darfur region. With over 20 participants representing television, newspaper, radio and other traditional forms of media, the workshop in Geneina set about increasing awareness of local Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Community Security and Small Arms Control (CSAC) issues. It also aimed to bring about a greater understanding of the roles they as media can play in being a part of this nationally and locally-owned process.



Deputy Wali at the opening ceremony in ElGeneina

The one-day workshop, which was opened by the Deputy Wali Abuelgamim Alamin Barka and other dignitaries, included presentations on the impact of small arms and light weapons in the region, cross-cutting gender issues, the role of the DDR and CSAC programmes in Darfur. The facilitators also presented public information materials and key messages that have been developed by the SDDRC and its partners. The afternoon session consisted of focus group discussions whereby the participants were grouped according to the media they represented, with the objective of discussing different means by which DDR and CSAC messages can be appropriately relayed.



Television and radio focus group, along with SDDRC CSAC focal point Mohamad Shokry

As one participant, Sudan TV's West Darfur correspondent Amrali Bushrawi, noted during the discussion, "The DDR is national work and radio and television will play a great role in sending the right messages across." He also noted the difficulties in disseminating the appropriate message given the context. He continued, "Radio and television must consider the language and culture of people here. If you bring the language of Khartoum, the people in El Geneina might not get it."

Another focus group led by participant Mohamad Ahmed Al-Dirdeeru discussed the issue of gender awareness in bringing about community security. He noted, "The woman is the mother and the sister, she can be the backbone of the community. Women can change the culture from war to peace and we should use them to raise awareness, especially the *Hakamas*; they can play a greater role in our community."

As one participant noted at the workshop's conclusion, "The workshop supported me with a map for public information and really showed me the importance of public awareness." As workshop facilitator SDDRC Small Arms focal point, Dr. Mahmoud Zain alabden remarked towards the end, "We want them to think about the future, about long-term control and to focus on education and



the tradition of the family.” The closing session of the workshop was attended by El Geneina Commissioner, Hassan Matar who commended the role of the media in raising awareness to bring about community security.

The workshop was overall fruitful, and the overarching goal, namely to reduce and eliminate current knowledge and information gaps in Darfur surrounding the DDR programmes, appears to have been achieved. Subsequent workshops, following a similar format, will take place in Nyala and in El Fasher in the coming weeks.

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