

UNESCO South Sudan arms former soldiers with life skills in exchange for guns

18 September 2013 - UNESCO today marks its successful closure of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme (DDR) Pilot Programme. 287 veterans are graduating today from the DDR Transit Facility, located in Mapel in Western Bahr El-Ghazal State. The veterans will be receiving official certificates of completion issued jointly by all three programme partners; the National DDR Commission (NDDRC), United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The DDR Pilot programme was launched mid-April 2013. Facilities and funding for this phase were provided by UNMISS. Since the launch, former combatants have undergone at least 90-day training which provides them with necessary knowledge and skills to help them reintegrate into their communities as civilians and productive citizens. The training programme has been comprehensive, focusing on literacy and numeracy, vocational and life skills as well as psychosocial support for the veterans. Excited graduates spoke of the skills they had learned and acquired over the period of their stay. Some graduates proudly showed off their ability to be able to recognize their names, while others proudly showed off the produce from the farm and the carpentry merchandise among other things.

“By equipping the former combatants with much needed life-skills, this programme will not only help these combatants to reintegrate but also to be empowered to actively contribute in the building of their respective communities”, said Salah Khaled, Head of Office of UNESCO South Sudan.

As the lead UN agency providing technical support and skills development, UNESCO has been supporting the NDDRC as well as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and Ministry of Labor and Public Service and Human Resource Development, throughout this pilot phase.

The programme is part of a memorandum of understanding for the pilot phase of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme (DDR) signed on 4th July 2012 by the Government of South Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The overall DDR programme for South Sudan will be implemented over the next eight years. By drawing on its technical expertise in the areas of vocational training and life-long learning, specifically in conflict-affected countries, UNESCO is working to ensure that South Sudan’s veterans are professionally and psychologically prepared for life beyond military service.

The Republic of South Sudan was admitted as a Member State of UNESCO in October 2011. UNESCO is working together with the South Sudanese Government to enhance

educational and training opportunities and advocate for the promotion of reconciliation and peaceful dialogue.
