

South Sudan transforms DDR program to make it attractive to ex-combatants

Tuesday 12 February 2013

February 11, 2013 (JUBA) - South Sudan's government has embarked on transforming the reintegration program into civil society of ex-combatants into sustainable income-generating developmental projects which will cater for their livelihoods outside military life.

The current parades of the South Sudan army and police have many ineffective personnel who are a severe drain on the operational capacity of the force and resources. Many are old, disabled and illiterate.

President Salva Kiir as a result has formed a National Council for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and put his deputy, Riek Machar, in charge of the body to design policies and explore new ideas to transform the program from the "classical" DDR to long-term sustainable beneficial program for those who will be demobilised, disarmed and reintegrated into society.

The classical DDR, which is commonly practiced in the world, only provides for a short-term single package of assistance to ex-combatants during the reintegration phase but the council sees that this policy would be problematic if applied to the region's ex-combatants.

Around 150,000 ex-combatants are targeted by the program, the majority of which will be formed into work brigades, trained in special skills and gradually transformed into cooperatives and companies to implement government projects.

Over 20 ministers and top army and police commands are members of the national DDR council, under the chairmanship of the Vice President, with the lead ministries including defence and veterans affairs, interior, wildlife conservation and tourism as well as the national security services.

In the meeting on Friday, the national DDR council directed the ministers to come up with projects that will be implemented through the DDR program, which will be implemented in phases.

The ex-combatants will be trained in many skills to cater for the implementation of developmental and income-generating projects in agriculture, roads, housing, fibre optic, carpentry, plumbing, dairy, poultry, and many others.

(ST)