



## No standing, few prospects

### How peace is failing South Sudanese female combatants and WAAFG

Women and girls formed a significant contingent of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and other armed groups (OAGs)<sup>1</sup> during the first and second Sudanese civil wars (1956–2005). Some fought on the front lines, while others travelled with the armed groups, carrying ammunition and food, and providing sexual services and medical support. Their roles were complex and multifaceted, and while some women served willingly, others were forced into supportive activities against their will. Still others saw their association with male soldiers as the only viable means of livelihood in a country bereft of economic opportunities.

Today, the contributions and activities of South Sudanese female combatants and women associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFG) remain largely unrecognized and undocumented. Their post-conflict status is among the lowest of all groups in South Sudan, regardless of ethnic or tribal background. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 neither identifies them as a specific group entitled to consideration, nor provides any special compensation for their many sacrifices. As of July 2008, promises of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) remain unfulfilled, and most women who were actively involved in the rebellion remain dependent on male soldiers and security service members.

Based on recent interviews and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders in South Sudan,<sup>2</sup> this *Issue Brief* provides a preliminary review of the roles of southern women and girls in

the Sudanese conflict, the specific threats they faced, and their involvement in and contribution to the CPA. It also examines gender relations in South Sudan since the end of the war and the failure of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and relevant UN bodies in responding to their needs as part of a DDR programme. It finds the following:

- Significant numbers of women contributed to the Sudanese war effort as active combatants.
- Sexual abuse of women by all of the parties to the conflict—including by government soldiers, the SPLA, the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF), and other armed groups and militias—was routine and has not been sufficiently acknowledged. Rape, abduction, forced marriage, and survival prostitution were all commonplace.
- Violent skirmishes are ongoing, taking place over dowry disputes and 'ownership' of WAAFG and their children, contributing to community insecurity.
- Measures taken to protect women during and after the conflict—such as the SPLA's internal code of conduct banning rape, and specific language on gender equality in the GoSS interim constitution—appear to have been largely ineffective.
- The delay in beginning DDR of both women and men is having a serious impact on the welfare of WAAFG and former female combatants who are not supported by the SPLA and continue to rely on high-risk survival techniques.

- The small numbers of women identified as eligible for DDR in the South underestimates their real contribution during the war.
- Security sector reform in the South has not been organized in a manner that supports and protects women. Men who have committed atrocities against women and girls are gaining positions in the security and police forces, while women are not receiving equal treatment in relation to opportunities and salary.

### Women and the conflict in the South

Women's roles in the 22-year Sudanese civil war (1983–2005) were much more varied and complex than has been generally acknowledged.<sup>3</sup> When John Garang formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) as a rebel movement in 1983, women enlisted along with men, citing political beliefs, empowerment, and equality as primary motivations: for some women, it was a war for freedom on more than one level.<sup>4</sup> Even today, it is not clear exactly how many women joined as active combatants and in supportive roles, largely because groups on all sides of the conflict are intent on playing down women's active participation.

The position of women changed considerably when the SPLA divided in 1991 after a failed coup attempt led by Riek Machar, a Nuer commander. Machar's SPLA–Nasir faction turned to the Government of Sudan (GoS) and eventually became the basis of the SSDF umbrella of government-aligned groups (Riek later returned to the SPLA and



◀ Two women carry a wounded SPLA soldier from the battlefield near Tam, West Upper Nile, 2002.  
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is now the vice president of the GoSS). The rift with the mainline SPLA was not only political, but ethnic in nature. Garang and most of his supporters were Dinka. When Machar's forces massacred Dinka civilians in an effort to capture Garang's home territory of Bor, the two groups became long-term enemies.

This split signalled an abrupt abandonment of tacit restraints on inter-ethnic and sexual violence honoured by generations of Nuer and Dinka.<sup>5</sup> Given the heightened level of insecurity for women, many were motivated to take up arms or join an armed group in a supportive function for their own personal protection against abduction and rape, as well as for sustenance.<sup>6</sup> Flight was another recourse open to them. By 2000, more than four million people had been displaced, primarily women and children, many fleeing to neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrent with the beginning of the second civil war, small arms began entering South Sudan in greater numbers, shifting emphasis away from conflict resolution towards the use of armed force. Women contributed to this militarization by encouraging their husbands and sons to join the SPLA and by taking up arms themselves.<sup>8</sup> Research by Pact Sudan suggests that women also played an active role in arming communities, purchasing guns for their sons and husbands, being the

'custodians of the guns', and smuggling weapons between areas, including across enemy lines and national borders.<sup>9</sup>

### Active female combatants

It was John Garang's personal belief that women should not form a major front-line contingent while the opposing forces' combatants were primarily men.<sup>10</sup> He also argued that because the war was forecast to last over a decade, the SPLA should 'keep back' and protect women so as not to sacrifice future generations. Nevertheless, in 1986 the SPLA started a single girl's battalion, called Ketiba Banat or 'Girls Cadre', and a group of approximately 300 girl volunteers were taken to Ethiopia to be trained as fighters.<sup>11</sup> But despite completing standard military training and being eager to fight, the brigade was given administrative duties in Ethiopia, far away from the front lines.

Though not officially sanctioned by the rebel leadership, local commanders across South Sudan also recruited women to fight alongside men in mixed cadres. Three women who held positions in the SPLA and later became combatants in the SSDF spoke of modest female contingents of foot soldiers at the front lines.<sup>12</sup> The SPLA and OAGs did not officially record the number of women fighters, and the SPLA position

today is that no women outside Ketiba Banat had official military duties. This is contradicted, however, by testimonies from women<sup>13</sup> and documentation from humanitarian agencies about direct military involvement.<sup>14</sup> When international NGOs arrived in Juba after the battle for the city in June 2002, for example, staff reported that many of the uniformed battlefield dead were female.<sup>15</sup>

### Women associated with armed forces and groups

According to women interviewed for this *Issue Brief*, the domestic and community status of WAAFG changed dramatically over the course of the 22-year conflict. In associating with combatant groups, they took on roles traditionally carried out by men and made decisions within their communities.<sup>16</sup> Many women living in, or close to, areas occupied by the SPLA and OAGs also stepped out of their traditional private domestic spheres to work in groups making clothes, food, and sandals for the front. Other essential services included making and delivering food, carrying ammunition and messages, and providing medical care. To fulfil these roles, women abandoned their civilian community structure and the prospect of safety in refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

In the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, groups of women known as the Hakamas actively associated with groups of fighting forces and encouraged men to fight through song and dance.<sup>17</sup> During the conflict, Hakamas songs gave fighters courage to overcome cowardice. The lyrics went so far as to call for the rape of enemy populations and the killing of civilians. Their influence had such an impact that the integrated UN DDR Unit and North Sudan DDR Commission have pursued some Hakamas to promote peace and reconciliation and disseminate information to communities about the upcoming DDR process.<sup>18</sup>

While some interviewed WAAFG voluntarily supported the SPLA and OAGs and travelled with them to the battle lines, others were forced—sometimes through abduction—to be porters or cooks. Forced recruitment during the conflict is well documented.<sup>19</sup> In focus groups, southern women said they accepted that when armed groups passed their villages, each family would do what it could to support them, including by providing food, child recruits, and porters to carry goods to the front line. Village chiefs were often the ones to organize the handovers.

During the conflict, WAAFG organized themselves into complex work structures based on age and physical health. Positioning themselves away from the front line, the older women cared for the babies and children born to WAAFG, as well as the so-called 'Red Army'<sup>20</sup> of children recruited to serve alongside men in battle.<sup>21</sup> Middle-aged women were responsible for making food to take to the front and for hunting game with guns, while the 20–30 year olds would walk to the front to replenish diminishing stocks. Having walked for days, these women would then turn around and carry the injured back to the bush to be treated, sometimes covering 60 km or more.<sup>22</sup> Child bearing was also a prominent role (see Box 1).

## Rape and sexual violence

The use of rape as a tactic of warfare against enemy communities was routine by armed groups operating in South Sudan.<sup>28</sup> All of the women interviewed spoke of having been raped, or knowing a family member or someone else who had been raped by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), SPLA, SSDF, or other OAG members.<sup>29</sup> Former child soldiers also reported having been instructed by commanders to collect women for the purpose of rape.<sup>30</sup>

In the first few years of the conflict, the threat of sexual violence was particularly high for southern women and girls living in garrison towns such as Juba, Malakal, Wau, and Yei, or other GoS-controlled areas. The SAF abducted women and girls from their homes at night and raped them as a means of 'punishing' them for the SPLA rebellion.<sup>31</sup> When John Garang broke from the SAF and formed the SPLA in 1983, he introduced an internal code of conduct banning rape and other atrocities against civilians.<sup>32</sup> However, despite the threat of execution by firing squad for men caught raping women,<sup>33</sup> abuses occurred frequently. SPLA soldiers are documented to have raped women when their transfers were imminent, for example, knowing they would escape punishment.<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch has also documented Dinka soldiers being

transferred for raping women, whereas men from other ethnic groups were shot.<sup>35</sup>

Inter-tribal sexual violence exploded as a tool of war after the 1991 SPLA split. Interviewed women reported a state of lawlessness and impunity in which they were never safe from rape and where even young children, women carrying babies on their backs, and elderly women were targeted. The SSDF applied terror tactics learned from the SAF.<sup>36</sup> One female former SPLA colonel reported how a town near Nasir, Upper Nile, was taken in 1993 by the SSDF where Nuer soldiers had been ordered to rape civilian women 'until they fell pregnant', in an attempt to exert their ethnicity.<sup>37</sup>

While the end of the conflict in 2005 brought a reduction in the rape of civilians, the scars left by such pervasive sexual violence still remain with many women in South Sudan today. Sexual health service providers in Juba report serious challenges to collecting data and in responding to the high rates of sexual violence both during the conflict and since the signing of the CPA. Because of the stigma of rape and single motherhood, women are reluctant to talk about it, even with medical staff, and to seek treatment. This is not only a matter of shame, but also of livelihood: raped women can lose their 'dowry value', making it difficult for them to find a marriage partner. Many raped women, whether unmarried or abandoned, are therefore socially and economically extremely vulnerable in South Sudan, without the protection and support traditionally provided by men.

## Women's contribution to peace and the CPA

With the deterioration, after 1991, of the rebellion into a bloody tribal war where southerners fought against one another, many women's commitment to the conflict waned. At the same time, there was an increase in diaspora attempts at advocating for peace, which adopted different tactics to call for an end to the ethnic violence. Some women threatened their husbands, still fight-

### Box 1 Keeping up the 'reproductive front'

Both women and men from the SPLA said that one of women's primary duties during the war was to 'provide children for South Sudan'.<sup>23</sup> This followed the pronouncements of community leaders and the military elite, who repeatedly voiced the expectation that women should 'keep up the reproductive front'<sup>24</sup> as part of the war effort. As a result, women had large families, weaning periods were reduced, and women and girls were allowed shorter gaps between pregnancies.<sup>25</sup> The increase in pregnancy rates in South Sudan occurred in the complete absence of a functioning health-care system, resulting in some of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world.<sup>26</sup> Women were transferred between men: when a husband died in fighting, a WAAFG living with his battalion would be taken by another 'husband', who would support her children. Interviewed women and girls travelled to the front specifically to be made pregnant, only to travel back to the bush to resume their other duties.

As a result of these practices, many widowed WAAFG today have children from different fathers, which carries a heavy stigma for both mother and children. The practice has also led to domestic disputes and community insecurity, as returning combatants, assumed dead, often make violent claims on former WAAFG, now remarried to others.<sup>27</sup> Children from first marriages are also often taken away from women who have remarried, a practice that is supported by customary law. When different fathers come from different tribes, stigmatization is particularly acute: the women and their children are rejected by both their own and their 'adopted' communities.



ing in Sudan, with hunger strikes and refusal of sex.<sup>38</sup> A group of Sudanese women in Kenya threatened to stop 'producing more children for the South' unless peace talks commenced. Other women used nakedness<sup>39</sup> to threaten their husbands, brothers, and sons.<sup>40</sup>

During this period, women from Nuer and Dinka communities in Sudan and in the diaspora maintained contact with one another while their male family members continued to fight. Their continued communication across tribal lines provided a forum to discuss issues affecting both communities. Women took a leading role in creating links and forums for resolving inter-ethnic conflict, leading to many grassroots peace accords.<sup>41</sup> Women-led civil society groups also formed with the specific aim of bringing a peace-building agenda to the South. The Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace, New Sudan Women's Federation, and New Sudan Women's Association, among others, led by the Sudanese diaspora, drew global attention to what was then 'the forgotten war'. Sudanese women travelled to Washington DC, the UN in New York, the Hague, and Beijing to lobby the international community to put pressure on Sudan's warring parties to end the conflict.<sup>42</sup> While they gained media coverage, their remoteness from grassroots organizations drew heavy criticism. They were also accused of pushing their own agendas and of consuming money that could have been better spent on women's activities inside Sudan.

Despite this, these groups pressed on with two central demands—a peaceful resolution to the conflict and the inclusion of women in formal peace negotiations (the latter is supported by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security', passed in 2000).<sup>43</sup> But while the SPLA did nominate a small handful of women leaders as members of the delegation to the 2002 Machakos talks, among others, this did not enable their strong participation. In fact, the women were routinely added to the delegations at short notice with little opportunity to consult with one another and develop a coherent women's

agenda. One female delegate at the Naivasha peace talks noted that women were always a minority and ill-prepared for debates with seasoned politicians who ridiculed or intimidated anyone who spent much time on gender issues. This lack of substantive representation by women partly accounts for why the CPA contains few specific provisions for women and girls.<sup>44</sup>

## Gender equality since the CPA

Soon after the peace agreement, the newly established GoSS agreed to an interim constitution that, in stark contrast to the CPA, included specific language on gender equality.<sup>45</sup> Strikingly, it mandates that 25 per cent of all positions—both legislative and executive—in the new administration should be held by women, 'as an affirmative action to redress imbalances created by history, customs and traditions'. The constitution also articulates a list of women's rights, including the right to equal 'dignity . . . pay . . . participation in public life . . . and property rights'.<sup>46</sup> More recently, the GoSS introduced a gender policy in June 2008 designed to redress discrimination in a number of key areas.

There has been modest progress in meeting those objectives. Today, women hold 17 per cent of all GoSS political positions, at both national and state levels.<sup>47</sup> However, in the highest decision-making circles, the ratio drops slightly: only 3 of 22 cabinet ministers are women. They are responsible for the Ministries of the Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism; Public Service and Human Resource Development; and Gender, Social Welfare, and Religious Affairs. The most powerful Ministries of Finance, Mining, Commerce, Parliamentary Affairs, Housing, Land, and Health remain led by male representatives.

In the GoSS, two of President Salva Kiir Mayardit's ten advisers are women: Rebecca Garang de Mabior on gender and human rights<sup>48</sup> and Ann Itto on agriculture and food security. Itto formerly held a seat in the Government of National Unity. Both women are

prominent women's peace activists and were instrumental in the SPLM/A during the conflict: Itto as a senior party member and spokeswoman, Garang as former SPLA Chairman John Garang's wife and adviser.

But while some diaspora women who obtained an education during the conflict are enjoying empowerment, equality, and well-remunerated jobs in the transitional government, opportunities remain extremely limited for the vast majority of southern women, especially those in rural areas. This is due to women's comparatively low education levels and an ingrained cultural setting that regards women and girls as second-class citizens. Most women in South Sudan require their husband's or brother's permission to associate freely with others. A recent survey in Central Equatoria, for example, found that women's participation in families and communities was limited to specifically defined roles, such as cooking and cleaning.<sup>49</sup> Interviewed women confirmed these narrowly defined roles and reported that they were not permitted to make decisions on behalf of their families.<sup>50</sup>

As long as the education of women and girls is almost non-existent, they will remain trapped in the domestic sphere. A 2004 UN Children's Fund report found that of a total population of 7.5 million people, only 500 South Sudanese girls completed primary school each year (a 0.8 per cent rate).<sup>51</sup> By September 2007 it appeared that the trend was getting worse: girls in South Sudan were reportedly marrying at an earlier age and increasingly dropping out of school. Peer pressure, early sexual relationships, and an attempt to secure economic and physical security were reported as critical factors influencing girls' decisions to leave school and assume domestic roles.<sup>52</sup>

Cultural factors play a large role in these decisions. Many men feel threatened by educated women, who are less likely to be compliant and therefore deemed less suitable for marriage. The practice of 'bride wealth'—the hand-over of cattle to a family in exchange for the marriage of a daughter—remains deeply ingrained. Girls are kept at home

for fear of being 'spoiled' (raped) by male teachers or strangers on the way to school.<sup>53</sup> Yet domestic violence is neither a recognized crime nor frowned upon. The reality is that women and girls have never enjoyed equal status in South Sudanese culture. This is clearly reflected in the post-CPA period in the lack of provision for them in the DDR process.

## DDR and security

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) mandates all UN DDR programmes to consider equitably the needs of female combatants and their dependents.<sup>54</sup> The resolution was further strengthened and reaffirmed by a UN Security Council presidential statement in 2006 calling for all DDR programmes to take special consideration of WAAFG.<sup>55</sup> The initial Interim DDR Programme (IDDRP) of 2005, which extends until December 2008, and the more recent Multi-Year DDR Programme (MYDDRP), which extends until 2011, have been signed and endorsed by the North and South Sudan DDR Commissions and are legally binding commitments. Both documents state that WAAFG and female ex-combatants will be eligible for a comprehensive DDR package, including health screening, education, training, and social and economic reintegration opportunities, alongside male ex-combatants. The IDDRP also states that WAAFG and other 'special needs groups' (SNGs) should be prioritized to go through DDR first, while the MYDDRP pledges to give women and other SNGs a 'specific focus'.<sup>56</sup>

The Sudan DDR Programme was designed to stagger the transition of combatants into civilian society starting with 50,000 beneficiaries with priority needs: 25,000 in the South and 25,000 in the North. For the first phase, the SPLA and South Sudan DDR Commission prioritized WAAFG, war disabled, and the elderly to be among the first group of combatants to be demobilized. Once these SNGs have been reintegrated as a priority, the full-scale demobilization and reintegration of the remaining male and female combatants is sup-

posed to take place across Sudan over a staggered period, in keeping with the terms of the CPA.

While SPLA-led civilian disarmament initiatives have taken place in various parts of the country, with varying levels of success,<sup>57</sup> the formal demobilization and reintegration process, integral to the CPA, has met serious political and financial barriers,<sup>58</sup> and, other than initial pilot projects in northern and eastern Sudan, has not started for adults anywhere in the country. The initial plans created by the North and South Sudan DDR Commissions and the Integrated UN DDR Unit have been stalled until recently, and, at best, the demobilization of WAAFG and other SNGs is unlikely to start until January 2009 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the expectations raised about lucrative reintegration packages are a source of great frustration for them. The demobilization process promises participants a reinsertion package that includes food items and a cash payment. As demobilization has not started, however, WAAFG are unable to find work, are isolated from their families and

communities, and have no means of subsistence.

In practice, identifying WAAFG for DDR purposes has been challenging for the South Sudan DDR Commission (see Box 2). Most Sudanese civilian women at one point in their lives fought for the SPLA and other militia in the South, or spent time carrying goods or providing other services for the front line. Many civilian women possess arms or are married to combatants. However, only those WAAFG who were 'dependent on the forces to the exclusion of other forms of social support from civilian communities' are eligible for DDR.<sup>59</sup> The vast majority of women who assisted the war effort on a part-time basis, or as needed, are excluded under this definition.

Based on this criterion, a pre-registration exercise for WAAFG in South Sudan took place in October 2005. An estimated 3,600 female combatants and WAAFG were pre-registered based on SPLA and southern OAG lists. However, civil society organizations immediately raised concerns about the validity of these numbers, the motivations for including the women on the

### Box 2 Assessing the needs of women in DDR

A significant gap exists in understanding the needs of women ex-combatants and WAAFG. In October 2005 a team composed of representatives from the Southern DDR Interim Authority, the UN DDR Unit, and the Southern Sudan Psychosocial Programme<sup>60</sup> was tasked with assessing the needs and capabilities of the pre-registering women. It found that many WAAFG were embroiled in dangerous activities in the post-CPA period through their ongoing links with the military. Survival techniques involved brewing alcohol, prostitution, and forming simultaneous attachments to different soldiers, often leading to violent disputes.<sup>61</sup> The team recommended that the SPLA should create a coordinated approach to gender and WAAFG to ensure women's continued confidence. It pointed out that the women were not only a population with acute protection needs, but were sources of conflict between military personnel and civilians.

Despite the fact that WAAFG, especially, often had multiple sexual partners during and after the conflict, their awareness of HIV/AIDS appears to be non-existent.<sup>62</sup> This, combined with their exposure to sometimes long-term sexual violence, highlights the need for screening for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV awareness counselling, and psychological counselling and referral services during demobilization and reintegration. Yet to date there has been no coordinated SPLA approach to support these women and, three years on, the needs of WAAFG are just as great.

Interviews and focus groups also revealed that despite developing a variety of skills during the conflict—such as food preparation and clothes production—WAAFG are not able to transfer those skills to the post-conflict economy. For example, food preparation and delivery for the SPLA is now outsourced to private companies from Uganda and Kenya, and uniforms and sandals are imported new.<sup>63</sup> This means that women typically remain dependent on salaried SPLA soldiers. WAAFG still live in and around barracks and other areas where male combatants congregate without having a formal role within the SPLA. Those who travelled with the army and OAGs towards the end of the war and are living outside of their tribal areas find it impossible to assimilate into the local community, thus increasing their dependence on soldiers, who often reject them. As a male SPLA brigadier explained: 'We tried to pay these women off, to make them leave, but they won't go.'<sup>64</sup>

lists, and the poor transparency of the vetting process. The number of those who were pre-registered almost certainly underestimates the real magnitude of women who should be eligible.

One of the challenges for the South Sudan DDR Commission, UN, and civil society in promoting the reintegration of WAAFG is the SPLA's continual focus on perceived immediate security threats. SPLA members feel that WAAFG and vulnerable groups should not be programming priorities because they do not pose as high a security threat as armed men. Neutralizing the latter was the motivation for the SPLA's civilian disarmament initiatives;<sup>65</sup> now the focus is on those OAGs who have merged with the SPLA. Indeed, to many SPLA members, WAAFG reintegration is not a security priority, but a programming nuisance.<sup>66</sup> Some SPLA members believe that DDR is a reward system for combatants and veterans, rather than a means of stabilizing society. According to this view, WAAFG who did not take part in hostilities should not be the first to be 'rewarded'.

Regardless of this attitude, the belief that WAAFG pose no security threat may not be completely accurate. There is evidence that WAAFG have cached weapons to protect themselves,<sup>67</sup> and there is a perception that violence by men fighting over WAAFG is on the rise.<sup>68</sup> The May 2008 fighting in Abyei between the SPLA and SAF, which left 89 people dead, was triggered, among other factors, by an incident involving WAAFG.<sup>69</sup>

## The security sector

Given the lack of other opportunities, most southern ex-combatants try to obtain positions in the army or the civilian security sector. The SPLA has been funnelling its excess human resources into the security sector since 2006, as a way of reducing its own numbers while maintaining support forces.<sup>70</sup> This stream of new recruits has resulted in over-filling the sector and indiscriminate enlistment. Many perpetrators of rape and sexual violence are among those recruited into the security forces.

Women have not shared in the recruitment trend, despite the GoSS's commitment to ensuring that they make up at least 25 per cent of the public sector. Poor education is the primary reason for not securing a position, although ingrained attitudes about women's traditional roles are also playing a part. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that those women who do secure jobs in the prison service or police may not even receive a regular salary, unlike their male counterparts. Despite this, many WAAFG are so desperate for work that they are willing to work at low and irregular rates.<sup>71</sup> Some are even forced to abandon their children to keep their jobs: there has been a reported rise in the number of young children left unattended in the markets in Juba by widowed WAAFG who take up work in the security sector.

If they had a choice, most women interviewed would prefer livelihoods outside the security sector in areas that would make them valuable to the civilian community. War has left them traumatized, and they would rather gain civilian-oriented skills.<sup>72</sup> However, with the employment market floundering in South Sudan and a weak civil society, security sector jobs are among the few employment opportunities available to those without professional skills.

## Conclusions

Southern female combatants and WAAFG made significant contributions to the Sudanese rebellion, a fact that remains poorly recognized today. Their contributions were not always voluntary, either, and the widespread, virtually systematic use of sexual violence and rape of southern women, especially after 1991, is a shameful reality of the Sudanese conflict that has never been acknowledged. A first step that the GoSS and SPLA could take to recognize and redress the sacrifices of female combatants and WAAFG would be to acknowledge publicly the many roles that women played in the conflict, praising positive contributions while condemning the many abuses inflicted on them.

After this symbolic but important step, it is vital for the GoSS to prioritize DDR for women, and to provide them with post-CPA opportunities commensurate with their needs and contributions. This means developing and implementing a transparent vetting process for the DDR of women, so that all of those eligible can be targeted. While a systematic needs assessment would be a logical part of this process, it is already clear that many women are in great need of sexual, reproductive, and psychological health services as part of demobilization and reintegration.

The gap between men's and women's access to southern security sector jobs also calls for rebalancing. Important measures would include the provision of equal job opportunities for women; training where required; and equal salaries, paid as frequently as those of their male colleagues. These steps would constitute de facto 'reintegration', and the ripple effects would be far reaching. For when women become economically independent enough to manage their own households and lives, they will undoubtedly contribute more meaningfully to the rebuilding of South Sudanese society. ■

## Notes

*This Sudan Issue Brief was based on research and analysis conducted by Esther Waters and Geneva Call, with support from Anki Sjoeborg and Lauren Gaffney.*

- 1 The CPA circumscribed legal armed entities to the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the SPLA; all other armed militias—so-called OAGs—were declared illegal and forced to either disband or associate with, and eventually become integrated into, either the SAF or the SPLA. See Small Arms Survey (2008a, p. 1).
- 2 People interviewed for this report included WAAFG, male and female SPLA members, other female combatants, UN staff, former child soldiers, female community members, and NGO representatives. Interviews were conducted in March 2008 in Juba and its environs.
- 3 Jok Madut Jok (1999), p. 429.
- 4 Fitzgerald (2002), p. 70; focus groups and oral testimonies, Juba, March 2008.
- 5 Hutchinson and Jok Madut Jok (2002).



- 6 Geneva Call focus groups with former child soldiers and women, Juba, March 2008.
- 7 NSCSE and UNICEF (2004).
- 8 Jok Madut Jok (1999), pp. 429–31.
- 9 McCallum and Okech (2008), pp. 50–51.
- 10 Interviews with high-ranking female SPLA officials, SPLA headquarters, Juba, March 2008.
- 11 Some interviewed women said they had been taken to training for the Girls Cadre at the age of five. Interviews with female SPLA members, Juba, March 2008. See also Africa Peace Forum and Project Ploughshares (2008, p. 47).
- 12 Focus groups with female ex-combatants, Juba, March 2008.
- 13 Focus groups with female ex-combatants, Juba, March 2008.
- 14 Interviews with UN Development Programme (UNDP), Pact Sudan, and Save the Children, Juba, March 2008.
- 15 Interviews with NGOs in Juba, March 2008.
- 16 Focus groups with female ex-combatants; women formerly associated with the SPLA; active female SPLA soldiers; and former child soldiers, civilian women, and women's organizations, Juba, March 2008.
- 17 For more on the conflict in the Nuba Mountains, see Small Arms Survey (2008b).
- 18 McCallum and Okech (2008), pp. 50–51.
- 19 HRW (1993), pp. 50, 71–92, 90, 95–98.
- 20 The name 'Red Army' was given to thousands of children who were taken by the SPLA between 1983 and 1990 to Ethiopia, and who were 'lured' under educational pretences and trained as combatants. Many served in the conflict under the age of 15. HRW (1993), pp. 105–6.
- 21 Interview with former child soldiers and WAAFG, Juba, March 2008.
- 22 Fitzgerald (2002), p. 70.
- 23 Interviews with former SPLA and OAG members, Juba, March 2008.
- 24 Hutchinson and Jok Madut Jok (2002).
- 25 Pact Sudan focus groups, Geneva Call focus groups, Juba, March 2008; McCallum and Okech (2008, pp. 50–51).
- 26 NSCSE and UNICEF (2004), pp. 36–37.
- 27 UNMIS (2005).
- 28 HRW (1993), p. 36.
- 29 Interviews and focus groups with 31 women, Juba, March 2008.
- 30 Oral testimony of former child soldier, Juba, March 2008; and focus group with former child soldiers, Juba, March 2008.
- 31 Focus groups with former child soldiers, Juba, March 2008; interview with UNDP technical specialist, Juba, March 2008.
- 32 The SPLA drew up a legal code, the *Sudan People's Revolutionary Laws, SPLM/SPLA Punitive Provisions 1983 (SPLA Code)*, which they claim they followed. The code made it a crime for civilians to commit murder, robbery, theft, criminal breach of trust, forgery, and rape, and to kidnap or traffick in minors. This was also verified during interviews with SPLA representatives. Punishment could include the death penalty, but it is unclear whether and how these provisions were enforced.
- 33 Researchers were unable to obtain figures on the numbers of men executed for raping women from the SPLA, whose representatives were reluctant to discuss the matter or acknowledge that its soldiers were involved in sexual violence. It is, therefore, impossible to determine whether the code of conduct was imposed.
- 34 Fitzgerald (2002), p. 90.
- 35 HRW (1993), p. 175.
- 36 HRW (1993) and interviews with UNMIS DDR coordinator, SPLA and ex-SSDF soldiers, child soldiers, and women, Juba, March 2008.
- 37 Interview with senior female member of the civil service, Juba, March 2008.
- 38 Interview with senior female member of the civil service, Juba, March 2008.
- 39 Nakedness is used as a curse in many Sudanese customary beliefs. See Itto (2006), p. 1.
- 40 McCallum and Okech (2008, p. 51).
- 41 Examples include the people-to-people processes, such as the Wunlit Covenant of March 1999 between the Nuer and the Dinka and the Lilir Covenant of May 2000 among Nuer groups.
- 42 Itto (2006), pp. 1–2.
- 43 UNSC (2000), p. 2.
- 44 The clearest statement is a somewhat weak and general claim to ensure 'equal rights'. See GoS and SPLA (2005, ch. II, part 1.6.2.16).
- 45 GoSS (2005, part 2, ch. II (20) and part 9, ch. II [146.3]).
- 46 GoSS (2005, part 2, stanza 20, pp. 64, 67).
- 47 Of all 226 seats in the GoSS (including regional assemblies), 38 are held by women. See <[http://www.gurtong.org/resourcecenter/gov/RegionalAssembly\\_list.asp](http://www.gurtong.org/resourcecenter/gov/RegionalAssembly_list.asp)>.
- 48 Rebecca Garang was made a presidential adviser in July 2007, having been effectively demoted from her position as minister of transport and roads.
- 49 IRC (2008), p. 8.
- 50 Interviews with former WAAFG, Juba, March 2008.
- 51 NSCSE and UNICEF (2004), p. 3.
- 52 IRC (2008).
- 53 Interview with Sudanese woman who worked with Sudanese refugees in Kenya and Canada, by telephone, March 2008; and interview with Save the Children representative, Juba, March 2008.
- 54 UNSC (2000), para. 13.
- 55 UNSC (2006).
- 56 As part of reintegration support, WAAFG will receive 'information counselling and referral services' (GoS Interim DDR Authorities, SPLM/A Interim DDR Authorities, and UN DDR Unit, 2005, p. 45). They will also be part of community-based reintegration programmes, based on their 'acquired skills and capabilities, with the aim of making them economically competitive and fully economically socially, psychologically and politically reintegrated into communities' (GoS, UNDP, UNMIS, and UNICEF, 2008, p. 23).
- 57 See Small Arms Survey (2007) for more on SPLA civilian disarmament campaigns.
- 58 See Gebrehiwot, Morse, and Ireri (2006) and Saferworld (2008).
- 59 GoS Interim DDR Authorities, SPLM/A Interim DDR Authorities, and UN DDR Unit (2005), p. 41.
- 60 UNMIS (2005), p. 1.
- 61 UNMIS (2005), p. 6.
- 62 UNMIS (2005), p. 7.
- 63 Interview with UNDP officer and civil servant, Juba, May 2008.
- 64 Interview with SPLA male brigadier, Juba, March 2008.
- 65 See Small Arms Survey (2007).
- 66 Interview with SPLA male brigadier, Juba, March 2008.
- 67 McCallum and Okech (2008), p. 51.
- 68 Interview with UNMIS DDR officer, Juba, May 2008.
- 69 Interview with UNMIS DDR officer, Juba, May 2008.
- 70 Half of the 4,896 prison sector staff members trained by UNMIS since 2006 were previously SPLA/OAG members. Interviews with UNMIS/UNDP, Juba, May 2008.
- 71 Interviews with former WAAFG, Juba, March 2008.
- 72 Interview with former SPLA female combatant, Juba, March 2008.

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## HSBA project summary

The Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) is a multi-year project administered by the Small Arms Survey. It has been developed in cooperation with the Canadian government, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and a wide array of international and Sudanese NGO partners. Through the active generation and dissemination of timely empirical research, the project supports violence reduction initiatives, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes; incentive schemes for civilian arms collection; and security sector reform and arms control interventions across Sudan. The HSBA also offers policy-relevant advice on redressing insecurity.

*Sudan Issue Briefs* are designed to provide periodic snapshots of baseline information in a timely and reader-friendly format. The HSBA also generates a series of longer and more detailed Working Papers in English and Arabic, available at [www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sudan).

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