

Joint Conflict Reduction Program Phase I Mid-term Evaluation Report

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This report is the result of a three-week mission to Khartoum in February 2013 to conduct a mid-term, informal evaluation of the Joint Conflict Reduction Program (JCRP). The report is divided into three sections: (i) strategic relevance of JCRP, (ii) performance review of JCRP, and (iii) JCRP expansion and replication.

Travel outside Khartoum was not possible for an international consultant in this mission period. Instead, a JCRP staff member (Ahmed Subahi) traveled to Darfur in this period, and was asked to explore expansion and replication issues. The outcome of his meetings and his conclusions are incorporated in the recommendations for expansion and replication.

Two additional documents are provided as outputs to this mission: (i) a revised Annual Workplan (AWP) 2013, and (ii) a draft Project Document for Phase II. Some recommendations in this report have already been incorporated to these two documents; where this is the case it is indicated. Other recommendations are to be addressed separately.

Strategic Relevance of JCRP

Assess the strategic relevance of the JCRP, given the changing context in Sudan, with reference to the newly developed Country Program Document (CPD) and Country Program Action Plan (CPAP)

Brief update on context

2011 and 2012 saw a significant shift in the conflict context of the areas where JCRP operates. During the mission, the JCRP team provided inputs to a review of the conflict context. These inputs are summarized below and are incorporated to both the AWP 2013 and the Project Document Phase II. This context update is also the starting point for an assessment of the relevance of the project.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Interim Period in Sudan ended in 2011. Despite the peaceful elections and referendum in this period, tensions between Sudan and South Sudan worsened after the secession of South Sudan in June 2011. Concretely, three disputes relating to unresolved issues between North and South have emerged.

First, conflict in two Northern states bordering South Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) re-started in 2011 due to grievances that remained unaddressed after the CPA interim period. On June 6, 2011, fighting broke out between the Sudan People's Liberation Army – North (SPLA-N) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in South Kordofan. Fighting quickly spread to many parts of the state. In September 2011,

fighting spread to Blue Nile State, where then Governor Malik Agar (of the SPLM) sided with the SPLA-N in fighting against SAF. The initial escalation of violence had a strong impact on the civilian population. Revenge and retaliation were common place, and have resulted in a general feeling of enmity and hostility between groups associated with either side of the conflict. Civilians have also suffered looting, displacement, lost livelihoods and limited access to basic services. Price rises, especially in areas controlled by the SPLA-N, have further affected livelihoods, and resources are often priorities for ammunition and guns rather than provision of basic needs. By 2013, it was clear that unpredictable fluctuations in armed violence and heightened tension between groups was the norm in both states. Furthermore, the dynamics of tribal and inter-group conflicts (both in SPLA-N and Government controlled areas) pass through and are affected by the broader dynamics of the state-wide conflicts.

Second, a dispute over the oil-rich Abyei Area (on the border between Sudan and South Sudan) was scheduled to be resolved via a referendum that would allow Abyei Area residents to choose whether to join Sudan or South Sudan. A disagreement over who qualifies as a resident resulted in cancellation of the referendum, and the status of the Area remains unresolved. The Abyei Area has over the past decades seen many armed clashes, often between the nomadic Misseriya and the Dinka Ngok. In 2009, fighting erupted in Abyei town, and displaced all of its population. Many had returned since then, but on May 19, 2011, an attack by the SPLA on a mixed convoy of SAF and UN vehicles re-started fighting in the area. The area continues to be heavily militarized, with military tensions kept at bay by an AU peacekeeping force (UNISFA). Tensions between Misseriya and Dinka Ngok remained high throughout 2012, and led to UNISFA establishing a "Buffer Zone Strategy" to keep the two communities separate, and divert the Central Misseriya migration corridor to join either the East or the West corridor.

These two border conflicts fall within the third, broader dispute between Sudan and South Sudan, which centers on provisions for oil payments (South Sudan ships its oil via Sudan) and for border demarcation and security. AU-sponsored negotiations in Addis Ababa are ongoing, led by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP). The most significant breakthrough in these negotiations came on September 27, 2012, with the signing of "The Cooperation Agreement" and the "Agreement on Oil and Related Economic Matters". The second of these agreements allowed for the resumption of oil production in mid October. However, the broader Cooperation Agreement, which deals with security and border arrangements, has yet to be implemented. This has disrupted traditional agreements between tribes for cross-border movement during the annual cattle migration, and resulted in insecurity along the border areas (including areas Blue Nile, South Kordofan, East Darfur and South Darfur).

The settlement of the Abyei Area and the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile continue to be mayor stumbling blocks to making security and border arrangements. An AUHIP proposal on the final status of Abyei Area presented in

September 2012 was accepted by South Sudan, but rejected by Sudan. The proposal called for a referendum to be held in Abyei in October 2013. On October 23, 2012, the AUHIP asked for negotiations to be extended for a further 6 weeks. This extension has not resulted in any agreement, as reported by the AUHIP on December 14¹. The Sudanese Government is now making the Agreement on Oil and Related Economic Matters conditional on full implementation of security arrangements². The two governments continued to meet in January and February in Addis Ababa, but there has been no breakthrough to date.

The conflict context in East and South Darfur is not only affected by lack security and border arrangements, but also influenced by the dynamics of the Darfur conflict. In July 2011, the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed by the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement in Doha. The agreement makes provisions for the establishment of a Darfur Regional Authority to oversee Darfur until a referendum is held to finalize its status. Progress on implementation of this agreement has been slow.

Recommendation 1: The team carries out context analysis on a regular basis and produces context briefs for internal purposes and for other UNDP teams. This rolling assessment of the situation is important and should continue.

Strategic relevance in the current context

JCRP has evolved in a relatively ad hoc way, in part building on strengths/innovations while responding to the significant changes in macro dynamics since the original design. In order to assess the continuing strategic relevance of the project, the following points were addressed with the JCRP team:

- (i) reflect about what is possible in terms of peacebuilding outcomes given the current context and articulate a new theory of change;
- (ii) overlay this theory of change with the current program scope in order to identify necessary adjustments;
- (iii) match the theory of change and (refined) interventions to CPAP and CPD outcomes.

The existing JCRP model was based on a post-conflict setting, with the CPA framing the relationships of relevant partners. These conditions no longer hold in the current context. However, it is clear from a review of the project's success in the past year that the current strategy of peace process accompaniment with Government partner continues to be relevant for certain local conflicts. Thus, the basic model of the project continues to be strategically relevant in the current conflict context, but is no longer sufficient to meet all the demands of conflict reduction work in the project areas. The new theory of change for the project must incorporate the complexity of working on local disputes while a state-wide conflict

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

is ongoing. Section II.A of the draft Project Document for Phase II outlines this expanded theory of change. In summary, there are three substantive changes to ensure the continued relevance of the project:

1. Increased emphasis on working with civil society organizations on peace process accompaniment for local conflicts (instead of focusing mainly on Government partners);
2. Adjustment to Window 2 grants to focus on initiatives that support community resilience to state-wide conflicts;
3. A new initiative to connect local stakeholders to relevant high-level peace processes through dialogue and dissemination of information.

In order to ensure these new strategies can be rolled out, the JCRP team should consider the following preparatory work:

Recommendation 2: The team would benefit from a detailed study (in-house or commissioned) of the new actors they will start engaging on peace process accompaniment. Specifically, it would be useful to carry out a review of the Native Administration structures outlining their ability to represent, trustworthiness, respect, politicization and accountability.

Recommendation 3: The team should research best practices on activities that can prevent community members from joining a conflict. This could be done in-house, combining a desk review of global best practices and consultations with key experts from UNDP and partner organizations.

Recommendation 4: The team will need to develop a strong relationship with the actors leading high-level negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, especially with the African Union, to ensure they can identify entry points to connect local stakeholders to the high-level peace process.

In light of the changes to the project strategy, the JCRP team needs to re-focus its relationship with the RPCM and the Peace Council. The conflict has politicized both these bodies and it is important that JCRP positions itself on neutral ground. This will be hardest to manage when it comes to connecting local stakeholders to the high-level peace process. The team should stay away from conferences at the state-level that are overly political, as it has in the past, but should support attempts by the RPCM and Peace Council to engage in the high-level peace process. Whilst the RPCM and Peace Council represent one party to the conflict only, they do appear to have a genuine desire to engage the national government in a more peaceful dialogue. The JCRP team should also find discrete and informal ways to maintain contacts in the SPLA-controlled areas.

Finally, the team should openly share the new JCRP strategy with the RPCM and Peace Council, and have an open discussion about constraints and limitations. Both partners have seemed open to this type of conversation, if managed tactfully.

Recommendation 5: Organize a meeting with the RPCM and the Peace Council (separately) to share the new JCRP objectives, identify where they are complementary and how they can support one another.

Strategic relevance in reference to the CPD and the CPAP

Section III (Results and Resources Framework) of the draft Project Document for Phase II links the new theory of change to the CPD and CPAP objectives.

Performance Review of JCRP

Assess whether planned goals and objectives of the programme are being achieved and recommend any adjustments needed. Review expenditure trends, funding gaps and needs vis-à-vis programmatic scope and needs. Review the relevance of the baseline, targets and indicators. Assess absorption capacity of IOM and UNDP, and of Government and NGO implementing partners. Identify lessons learnt, best practices and constraints that should be documented.

Monitoring goals and objectives

The JCRP expanded at a time when its operating context was severely deteriorating. Given the political, security and access challenges the project has faced, it has made remarkable progress towards its goals and objectives.

Since its inception, the project has steadily developed a set of trainings and accompaniment modalities to deliver its output 1 (capacity building). In 2012, project staff seconded to the RPCM and Peace Council made it possible for these organizations to manage a Letter of Agreement with UNDP (albeit with difficulties as explained below), giving them greater financial and operational independence. Also by 2012, the project was delivering 23 trainings reaching a total of 619 participants. Perhaps the most impactful of these trainings has been the Peace Ambassadors programs, which provides conflict management skills to identified local peace activists.

Progress on delivery of output 2 (peace processes) has also been steady. The summary table of peace processes developed as part of this consultancy (annex 1) shows how peace processes since 2009 have delivered agreements that hold in many areas, whilst acknowledging that some agreements have fallen apart due to the state-wide conflict. However, progress on this output is currently constrained by the absorption capacity of the RPCM and Peace Council (more on this below).

Outputs 3 and 4 are harder to assess, since delivery effectively started in Q3 2012. For output 3, IOM has responded very efficiently to peace dividends identified by communities after a local peace process. However, identification of these peace

dividends and necessary follow-up technical assessments have been constrained by access restrictions. For output 4, IOM has efficiently managed the grants disbursement process. However, delivery under these grants has been slowed by new Government approval processes introduced because of the ongoing conflict.

The main difficulty with assessing progress towards goals and objectives under all four outputs is that current monitoring efforts are not systematic and focus overly on measuring delivery of activities, rather than quality or contribution towards outcome objectives. For output 1, there is little assessment of the quality of trainings and little evidence of their impact on the delivery of peace activities. Output 2 is a little better, since whether or not a peace agreement holds is a good indication of its contribution towards the outcome objective of peace consolidation, but there is currently no measure of the effect of peace process accompaniment on overall measures of social cohesion and reconciliation at the community level. Outputs 3 and 4 are measured on delivery of grant activities, not on the impact of these activities on peace.

A meeting with the JCRP team members responsible for monitoring generated the recommendations below. These are complemented by the detailed baselines, indicators and targets developed for the revised AWP 2013.

Recommendation 6: monitor beneficiaries of all JCRP activities (peace processes, trainings, grantee activities).

- a. Create a (online) spreadsheet that lists in each row all the concrete activities for all four outputs
- b. Spreadsheet columns are: total attended, women attended, youth attended, number of CSOs involved, if RPCM / PC facilitated then quality of facilitation (scale 1 – 10), other comments (e.g. what CSOs, comments from participants)
- c. UNDP calls JCRP staff after each activity is finished to ask the questions on the spreadsheet; IOM calls grantees after each report to ask the questions in the spreadsheet

Recommendation 7: set up and maintain a dispute monitoring system that systematically tracks flashpoints and peace processes.

Recommendation 8: monitor capacity building of Government partners by conducting an annual assessment using the MSU template and including a survey of JCRP staff contribution.

Recommendation 9: develop measures of impact for the project.

- a. Get the CRMA data and extract a baseline of perceptions (recommend that this is a short narrative summary, looking at different perceptions at the state and locality levels)
- b. Design a focus group methodology that responds to the same type of perceptions as the CRMA baseline data

c. IOM to coordinate grantees running a focus group at the end of each grant using this methodology; UNDP to coordinate hiring a national organization (e.g. University of Dilling or University of Khartoum) to run focus groups in a selection of communities around SKS and BNS using the same methodology.

Financial delivery

Overall financial delivery for 2012 is 58%, which is acceptable given the constraints faced by the project. However, a number of constraints to financial delivery deserve attention from the team.

Financial delivery is lowest for output 2, standing at 32%. Delivery for this output relies largely on Letters of Agreement with RPCM and Peace Council. This mechanism for financial delivery is adequate in supporting the capacity building goals of the project vis a vis these two key partners. However, since the letters were signed in early 2012, the team has learned two key lessons. First, there continues to be a great need for support in managing the funds disbursed through this LoA, not just for all administrative procedures are correctly followed, but also to ensure that funds are allocated to the activities set out in the LoA (rather than re-routed to more immediate concerns that emerge later). Second, changes to the composition of both the RPCM and Peace Council have seriously reduced the human resources available to both organizations to deliver activities, so that the financial targets laid out in the LoA are difficult to meet.

These difficulties with LoAs and delivery under output 2 make the case for increased delivery in partnership with other (civil society) actors as outlined above even stronger. Currently, the only alternative to an LoA for financial delivery of activities in outputs 1 and 2 are personal advances taken out by project staff. This is not a scalable solution, and will quickly become unworkable. After discussion with colleagues in finance, MSU and operations, the best solution seems to be to set up a money vendor service via Bank of Khartoum. The service would be requested in writing by the JCRP Project Manager on a need basis, no later than 5 days prior to an event. The banking service provider would ensure that the all the required payments are made at the identified location on the date requested by the Project Manager. After delivery of the services, the banking service provider would send a bill to the Project Manager along with the original supporting documentation of the service provided (e.g. payment of DSA with the list, signature and ID number of the payee, payment for transportation based on invoice or vendor ID etc). Based on the bill and supporting documentation furnished by the banking service provider UNDP would pay the bank for the services received.

Recommendation 10: finalise arrangements for a money vendor service via Bank of Khartoum and reduce the amount of funds channeled through the LoAs with RPCM and Peace Council.

This arrangement will also directly support delivery of output 1, since training delivery is at times constrained by the same financial issues. It will also indirectly support delivery of output 3, which is constrained by the speed at which peace dividends can be identified following a peace process.

Financial delivery of output 4 in 2012 is 48%. Much of this has to do with the late disbursement of funds, which has resulted in only one round of grants proposals. However, IOM has also distilled a number of lessons learned from the first round of grants. Many of these lessons were confirmed during separate interviews with grantee organizations, specifically that future grants should be given to organizations that already have a presence on the ground in the project areas, grants should be larger (up to 100,000 USD), grant projects that work well should be replicated or expanded, and more emphasis should be placed on projects which incorporate concrete delivery (rather than dialogue only). IOM also suggests that grants should be limited to organizations that have a pre-existing four-partite agreement with HAC and have sufficient financial resources to start activities without an advance. On these two points, grantees strongly disagreed. The financial requirement would disqualify many smaller organizations that work at the grassroots, thus reducing the capacity building impact of output 4. The agreement requirement would disqualify organizations that the Government may be uncomfortable with initially, but that they can be persuaded to work with (this was the case with a number of grantees in 2012). Disqualifying them would affect the neutrality of JCRP.

Recommendation 11: accept the risk of working with organizations that (i) may not have established relationships with HAC and / or (ii) may have financial constraints. Work with these organizations through close liaison and support, revoking grant agreements only when delivery proves impossible.

Federal level partners

One perceived challenge to project operations is the lack of a clear federal-level technical counterpart. The official technical partner of JCRP is the Higher Council for Decentralisation. However, the Council holds very little political sway and in fact has limited technical capacity. The team identified three possible options for federal level partners but could not agree on a recommendation:

- Option 1: Continue to work with the Council. This has the benefit of retaining the neutrality of the project vis a vis national politics, but the risk of not having a strong federal ally to support project work if it is ever questioned by the national government.
- Option 2: Engage with Presidential Affairs. The risks and benefits of this option are the exact opposite of option 1.
- Option 3: Advocate for the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. This would in many ways be an ideal solution, but it seems unlikely that there is

the political will at the federal level to pursue this. It could be an option to explore once there is a peace agreement in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Finally, grantees under outputs 3 and 4 expressed a need for greater coordination between grantees, facilitated by IOM and UNDP. It was also clear that not all grantees had fully understood the complementary roles of IOM and UNDP, and some did not understand how their grant project fitted within the broader JCRP strategy.

Recommendation 12: IOM should coordinate regular meetings of grantees, including UNDP staff, both in Khartoum and in the field. The meetings could focus on problem solving and providing skills at the different stages of project implementation (e.g. IOM is planning to hold a meeting to discuss focus group methodology as the projects near their evaluation phase).

Documenting lessons learned

Since its inception in 2009, the JCRP has developed its strategy building on past experience. However, very little of this experience is systematically recorded. As it nears the end of Phase I, the project could document four key lessons that help identify both best practices and likely constraints to the JCRP model of local peacebuilding:

- The project has developed a unique method of peace process accompaniment. It would be useful to document the elements of accompaniment, the methodologies used at each step and the main challenges of each.
- The project has many implicit assumptions about the elements of peace process accompaniment that ensure success: peace agreement monitoring/follow-up, importance of diyya collection/payment, broader grassroots engagement (i.e. of women and youth), role of peace dividends, etc. In addition to documenting these elements, it would be useful to document factors that participants in successful peace processes identify as critical to success.
- It would be useful to document the differences between peace processes that have proved resilient to the state-wide conflict and those that haven't, and examine any trends that emerge that could inform future work and ensure local peace processes are more resilient to conflict.
- JCRP has trained a broad range of actors (UN, NGO, civil society and Government) on a variety of topics related to peacebuilding (conflict management, mediation, conflict sensitivity, etc). Although the team reuses materials regularly, it might be useful to establish a set of standard training materials, as well as a manual for trainers outlining common pitfalls in training.

JCRP Expansion & Replication

Explore the possibility of expansion of the JCRP to other areas along the border with South Sudan. Explore the possibility of replication of the JCRP model in other program areas, specifically examining possible linkages with the Darfur Community Recovery for Coexistence (DCRC).

Expansion to East Darfur

JCRP has a clear entry point for expansion into East Darfur State. Conflicts in West Kordofan, where the project is already engaged in supporting the efforts of the RPCM, take place in a larger conflict area that expands into East Darfur and South Sudan. This conflict area covers the ‘triangle’ of relationships between Misseriya, Rizeghat and Dinka Malual. The RPCM is currently engaged in a peace conference between two Misseriya clans, which is being held in Adein and mediated by Rizegat Ajawet. Profesor Bashtena, the RPCM member based in West Kordofan, has been a key figure in many Misseriya – Rizegat mediations.

Key Government authorities in East Darfur also express that there is a great need for peacebuilding activities in the state. In meetings with JCRP staff, they invited UNDP to support such activities. Although the DCPSF already operates in East Darfur, its activities do not include the type of peace process accompaniment work that JCRP excels at. There is space for complementarity, at least in outputs 1 and 2. If JCRP begins to give small grants under its outputs 3 and 4, close coordination with DCPSF will be necessary.

Recommendation 13: In 2013, JCRP should begin to expand into East Darfur by carrying out activities under outputs 1 and 2. Entry points should be linked to JCRP’s work in West Kordofan, before expanding to other issues in East Darfur.

Recommendation 14: The Phase II Project Document should include activities in East Darfur for all outputs. However, the project team should discuss with DCPSF the best way to coordinate JCRP and DCPSF small grants.

There is some confusion about the peacebuilding organizations at work in East Darfur. A “voluntary committee of nine” led by Abdel-Rahman Kasha and Ali Jamaa is playing a critical role in the current Misseriya conference in Adein, and is considering setting up a Misseriya-Rizegat mediation committee. The Adein Commissioner chairs the Higher Preparatory Committee for this same conference and has also established peacebuilding committees at the community and locality levels. He is also considering establishing a state-level peacebuilding structure.

Recommendation 15: The JCRP team should engage primarily with the state-level peacebuilding structure that the Adein Commissioner is looking to set up, and secondarily with the “voluntary committee of nine”.

Support to DCRC

The Darfur Community Recovery for Coexistence project works in North and Central Darfur to facilitate dialogue for coexistence and reconciliation between IDP host communities, IDP communities and communities of return. It does this by establishing Peace and Development Councils (PDCs) in IDP host communities and communities of IDP origin. Although its objectives and mode of operation are substantively different from JCRP, the project staff and partners require a similar skill set around conflict management and conflict sensitivity. DCRC project staff have expressed a need for training in these competency areas, both for project staff (in North, South and West Darfur) and for partners at the community level. Partners to be trained should be identified by DCRC staff, but are likely to include the North Darfur Ajaweed organization (currently the main recipient of DCRC funds) and the PDCs that have already been set up at community level in Kutum, Kabkabeya, Elseraif, Saraf Omer etc.

Recommendation 16: JCRP staff should develop and deliver basic and advanced training courses in conflict management and conflict sensitivity for DCRC staff and selected DCRC partners. Trainings should be delivered in Arabic at field locations by JCRP staff, with logistical support from DCRC staff. Training curricula should be based on the standard training materials that JCRP has used elsewhere.

In its current design, the main difference between DCRC and JCRP is how it views the role of government in peacebuilding. DCRC takes an approach where government (or lack thereof) is viewed as a constraint/negative force and therefore effort is focused as close to the impacted stakeholders as possible in order to empower them to effect change. JCRP takes an approach where government-backed or government-led organizations (that are somewhat separate from government) are viewed as a potential positive force, especially when it comes to implementing and sustaining agreements. It is clear given the Darfur context and from the target stakeholders (IDPs) of DCRC that a community-based approach is crucial to mediating peace. However, the DCRC might benefit from also working with a government-led or government-backed institution to ensure the sustainability of agreements reached.

In Central Darfur, the Peace and Reconciliation Commission was established by the state government in 2012. The Commission is a unique structure in Darfur, not present in the other states. It falls under the leadership of a Commissioner, and is chaired by a deputy Commissioner who in turn has eight assistants in the eight localities of the state. The Commission also has its own administrative and finance support staff. With appropriate support, this structure could become an effective government partner to DCRC.

In North Darfur, the Ajaweed organization receives all DCRC funds. It operates in Kutum, Kabkabeya, Elseraif, Saraf Omer, Mileet, El Kooma and the rural areas of El

Fasher. Whilst this organization should be trained to ensure it can deliver quality activities on behalf of DCRC, it does not have the right technical capacities or organizational set up to be the main government-led counterpart in a JCRP-style engagement.

Recommendation 17: JCRP should support DCRC efforts to advocate for and support state-level structures similar to RPCM and Peace Council. The JCRP team can assist the DCRC team by sharing organizational documents of RPCM and PC (ToRs, workplans, etc) and by supporting delivery of training. Eventually, JCRP and DCRC should consider exchange visits between RPCM / PC and their Darfur counterparts.

Finally, the DRA is due to set up a Darfur Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although its Terms of Reference have not yet been defined, it seems likely that it will have at least an oversight role for any state or community level peacebuilding activities. Good time to engage. JCRP and DCRC should jointly approach the DRA at this time, since it would be useful for both to be engaged as the Commission structure is defined. However, the projects should retain their focus at the state and community level, and avoid being pulled into supporting a region-wide organization at this time.

Recommendation 18: JCRP and DCRC should develop a relationship with the DRA-led Darfur Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for information sharing only.