



Briefings *from* The North-South Institute

Police Reform in Southern Sudan *Measuring the public's sense of security*

After more than two decades of fighting, the second civil war between Sudan's North and South ended in 2005 with a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that gave the South a large degree of autonomy and the opportunity to vote for full independence in 2011. The CPA improved the overall sense of security in the South but has done little to reduce the region's internal conflicts. Armed attacks on civilians and child abductions are widespread, particularly in rural areas where police and military presence is limited. The proliferation of illegal arms, cattle rustling, the presence of Lord's Resistance Army rebels, and inter-tribal conflicts over land and resources have the potential to escalate and undermine the entire peace agreement.

The peace agreement broadly stipulates that the primary responsibility of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is to safeguard Southern Sudan against external threats, while the police are supposed to fight crime and maintain public safety (i.e. security).

The army may provide support to the police if necessary.

In an effort to achieve stability through security sector reforms, the Government of Southern Sudan recently launched an ambitious program to transform the SPLA into a professional army. As well, plans are underway to carry out a massive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program targeting some 90,000 SPLA combatants.

The Southern Sudan Police Service (SSPS), meanwhile, has yet to become the primary agency to ensure civilian security. In much of Southern Sudan, particularly in remote areas, police presence is limited or non-existent. Police pay is inadequate and irregular. There is no single national police training academy.

As a consequence of this and the limited attention it receives from international agencies, the police service lacks legal frameworks for its activities, an effective organizational structure, and even the most basic equipment and infrastructure.

At the same time, the SSPS continues to absorb a large number of SPLA personnel who have little or no training, and without a reallocation of resources to cover the costs.

The SSPS is still struggling to define and clarify its place in the wider security architecture of Southern Sudan. The lack of a clearly defined place for the police within the structure of the government in the South has led to serious coordination problems within the police itself and challenges in coordinating with other security and defence organs.

Noticeably lacking in all this has been a clear picture of public perceptions of the police and an assessment of the public's general sense of safety and security (or lack of it). That changed when the University of Juba's Centre for Peace and Development Studies (CPDS), in collaboration with The North-South Institute (NSI), conducted the first locally-led policy research project on police reform and community security issues in Southern Sudan.

Funded by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the survey set out to learn about civilian security requirements in order to ensure that any policy formulation took into account local experiences and views. The survey itself was conducted by Southern Sudanese, to build local expertise into the research and analysis.

Key Issues

The research sought to investigate the state of police reform in the wider context of security sector reform. To do this, the survey team also reviewed relevant literature and held talks with senior government officials, SSPS leadership, NGO personnel, and bilateral and multilateral participants.

The survey comprised 850 interviews in six of the 10 states of Southern Sudan. (During data analysis, 82 of the interviews were excluded for various reasons.) Random and targeted samplings were combined to ensure that young people, the elderly, women, and a variety of ethnicities were represented.

The research sought to answer a wide range of questions. What are the major security threats in Southern Sudan? What is being done about police reform, and what impact is it having on the ability of the police to enforce the law, protect all citizens and become accountable to civilian authorities? What are the central national factors, broader national-level political-economic dynamics, and international factors shaping the reform process? What could leading stakeholders do to move the region towards more effective, inclusive, accountable and sustainable policing?

Major security threats		
Overall, what are the most common types of security-related problems in the area?		
Problems	Frequency	% (out of 768)*
Theft	452	58.9
House breaking (burglary)	171	22.3
Abduction of girls and women (forced marriage)	165	21.5
Robbery	156	20.3
Revenge killing	105	13.7
Murder	112	14.6
Cattle rustling	140	18.2
Child abduction	77	10.0
Land grabbing	95	12.4
Sexual assault	37	4.8

**Respondents identified more than one issue, so the frequency adds up more than 100%.*

The *CPDS/NSI Working Paper on Police Reform in Southern Sudan* that emerged from the research shares the findings and considers the policy implications of the first evidence-based survey of community perceptions on policing in the region.

The snapshot of security issues across the still fragile social and political landscape also offers a useful baseline for policy debates on police reform and for practical efforts to promote a more community-friendly approach to policing in Southern Sudan.

The survey shows that SPLA soldiers have taken over management of day-to-day internal security even though they lack training in civilian law enforcement and discipline. At the same time, many people see security forces — the SPLA, the police, and other armed groups —

as major sources of insecurity and human rights abuses. Most communities across Southern Sudan continue to view the traditional leaders known as the Boma Chiefs as the main providers of security.

The SSPS faces many substantial problems in becoming an effective, accountable and professional organization. The widespread proliferation of illegal arms among much of the community, combined with the lack of training and equipment means that the police are often unable to disarm civilians. In many instances in fact, civilians are better armed than the police. A survey in 2007 estimated that between 1.9 and 3.2 million weapons were in circulation – two thirds of them in civilian hands. As a result, the SPLA reverts to its war-time role and intervenes, leading to clashes between army and police.

The foundation of Southern Sudan’s criminal justice system, including the Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Judiciary Act, and the Police Act still has not been passed. As a result, the police continue to operate under Presidential Decree with no law or operating procedures governing their activities or structures. The specific jurisdictions of the police at the national, Southern Sudan and state levels remain undetermined. Coordination among security institutions is weak, and the police in particular are often sidelined when it comes to contributing to important decisions.

The lack of public confidence in the police stems from the perceived lack of professionalism, the lack of “means and material” (such as uniforms and equipment), and corruption. This may be because the majority of police officers are former SPLA soldiers who joined the police service without proper training. It also likely relates to the very limited budget available for capacity building, equipment and training. Although the government has mandated that all police stations

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are to have “public grievance units” to receive and investigate complaints of police misconduct, this policy has yet to be put into practice.

The survey found that the most common threats to personal security — which vary by gender and region — were theft, burglary, abduction (of females for forced marriages), murder, revenge killings, cattle rustling, child abduction, and land grabs. Women questioned about threats listed verbal abuse as the chief complaint.

Police performance standards, as perceived by the community and particularly by youth, seem to be

falling in part because of arbitrary arrests and violations of human rights by some officers. Twenty-five per cent of respondents said the performance of the police was poor in terms of respect for human rights, equitable service, and respect for the rule of law. For example, in October 2008 and January 2009, in Juba and Bor respectively, young men and women were arrested for wearing tight jeans and short skirts. The police claimed the young people displayed “bad behavior” by dressing “provocatively in a manner that exposes (them) to risk of rape.”

While demobilized soldiers remain the main source of recruitment for the police, political will for better recruitment procedures such as vetting remains very low. Moreover, 90 per cent of the police officers are illiterate, making basic tasks challenging. Most are approaching retirement age and need to be replaced by young officers. Meanwhile, little effort has been made to include women in the police force, despite their contribution to the war effort.

Police performance on human rights, equitable services, and rule of Law		
How do you rate the actual performance of law enforcement by the police in terms of respect for human rights, equitable services and respect for the rule of law?		
	Frequency	% out of 768
Good	231	30.1
Fair	235	30.6
Poor	193	25.1
No opinion	32	4.2
Not applicable	77	10.0

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Conclusions

Both multilateral and bilateral donors have been involved in improving the professional standards of the SPLA as well as the police and prison services, particularly through training that targets senior personnel. However, donor investment in infrastructure and organizational development has been limited in general and for the police in particular. As well, there are critical gaps in linking bilateral support with wider security reforms.

The Government of Southern Sudan should promulgate an enforceable code of conduct for police officers, clarifying their roles and responsibilities, and providing a basis for more transparent accountability. The government should also set up a police training centre that emphasizes basic literacy, democratic policing principles, and modern policing techniques. In the interim, the government should introduce a program on human rights for all officers and gender-sensitivity training based on international standards.

The SSPS itself is urged to find a way to encourage collaboration with the Boma chiefs in order to take advantage of their knowledge of local needs and their legitimacy among constituents.

In addition to undertaking a census that includes registering all police personnel, screening officers, issuing SSPS identity cards, and certifying those fit to continue duty, the SSPS should establish a fair vetting process, regardless of political sensitivity, through which officers accused of human rights violations may be held accountable.

In addition to improving donor coordination in security sector reform, the international community should support the establishment of an adequately-funded and Southern-relevant police training academy in Juba, with decentralized training centres in the ten states. Donors should reach out to local participants and involve them in the design and implementation of security sector reforms and police reform projects

in particular. For example, local research institutions such as the University of Juba's Centre for Peace and Development Studies could help establish training courses for the police on human rights.

An effective and democratic security structure may be a long way off, the Working Paper concludes, but national and international participants could support and sustain the political commitment for locally-led police service development. Only after reform is embraced at the highest levels — in legislation, organizational structure and infrastructure investment — can the SSPS reasonably be expected to respond effectively to critical security threats.

For more information on Police Sector Reform in Southern Sudan, to access a comprehensive policy document, or to listen to our podcast on this subject, see our website at www.nsi-ins.ca.

