

BICC Training on SALW Control in South Sudan: Course Evaluation and Impact Assessment Results

Background

BICC's Training in SALW Control in South Sudan project aimed to enhance peace and security through the delivery of four training courses in the region (November–December 2006). The goal of the training was to assist the people of Southern Sudan to enhance their security by increasing capacity to address the SALW problem, and thus strengthening implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

The BICC training courses were intended to transfer knowledge, skills and tools on SALW control to a variety of different target groups in Southern Sudan. These included NGO/Community-based Organization (CBO) representatives, local administrators, traditional chiefs, church representatives, legislators, members of the security services, and government officials. In addition to SALW-specific matters, skills taught in the courses include project/campaign planning, awareness-raising and training skills. Course content was based on several core TRESA modules modified for local capacities and background.

BICC conducted course evaluations in four training locations for civil society. A formal evaluation of the course for members of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) proved to be impracticable.

In addition to the end-of-course evaluations, local partners undertook a BICC-designed impact assessment of its training courses from 22 February–16 March 2007. The purpose of this assessment was to obtain feedback on the actual transfer and application of the knowledge, skills and tools taught in the courses to individuals or groups beyond the courses' confines.

Course Evaluations—reactions and perceptions

Method

The aim of these evaluations was to assess participants' reaction and perceptions of the material presented in the course, keeping in mind that negative reactions potentially limit the level of learning possible from the course. BICC designed a simple questionnaire and the project teams delivered it orally to course participants to ensure understanding by those unable to read. They also encouraged participants to write down/dictate their answers in their language of preference, though many wrote in English with the assistance of a translator. Several evaluations remain written in Arabic and Nuer.

More specifically, the evaluation aimed to assess whether the material in the course was perceived as useful within their communities and/or relevant/easily transferable to their work. It also attempted to assess the transfer of knowledge that occurred and the retention of key concepts taught in the course by asking participants to indicate what they had learned that was new.

Course evaluations asked the following four questions:

1. Did the training meet your expectations?
2. Did you learn something new? If so, what?
3. Will you use what you have learned in your community/work? How?
4. What did you like the most about the training? The least?

Findings

Reactions and perceptions of the course were overwhelmingly positive and provide indications of immediate learning that took place from the courses. Some sample responses for questions two and three are included below.

Question 2: Did you learn something new? If so, what?

- The way you can keep guns away from children
- The way you can store guns after disarmament
- DD&R
- Why youth are the victims of SALW
- Disadvantage of owning a gun
- Why guns are a danger to the people
- The difference between civilians and the army
- SALW control, action planning
- DD&R, weapons collection, spoilers and key actors
- Team work
- Causes of violence, disadvantages of SALW on society
- SALW control: supply, demand, misuse

Question 3: Will you use what you have learned in your community/work? How?

- Yes, because I want our people to be safe from small arms death
- We will put in practice our demonstration [role play] to the community
- Yes, I may go to my community and educate them not to play with weapons
- I will talk to my community and mobilize them
- I will, since the victims are women whose children are killed every now and then
- I will report to the police if I see someone with a gun
- Where there is peace there is development and we want other people to come again to encourage peacebuilding

Findings may have been affected by the unwillingness of participants to deliver criticism, or from a desire to please the trainers. While the teams did also receive several critiques in person (namely the lack of t-shirts and money offered by BICC), this human/cultural dimension should be taken into consideration in designing and delivering course evaluations, particularly in the Southern Sudanese context.

We conducted the evaluation of the SSLA course in the form of a half hour discussion at the end of the course. Some central participants had by then left due to the time and other commitments. Overall, the responses to the course were positive. Two major comments were:

- The perceived (by legislators) need to provide similar training to members of the executive, and
- The provision in training of more Southern Sudanese content.

Impact Assessment—transfer and application

Method

Almost three months after the delivery of all four training courses in late November/early December 2006, local partners carried out the BICC-designed impact assessments consisting of a standardized questionnaire for civil society participants and targeted questions for legislators that participated in the Juba training course. BICC had also developed a special questionnaire for members of the SSDDRC that participated in the Bor and Ayod courses to acquire more specific information with regard to their learning from the courses. It should be noted that we received no responses from members of the SSDDRC, largely due to infrequent and unreliable e-mail access, nor from members of the SSLA. The latter is due to the fact that, during the time of the assessment, the Assembly was on recess with many members out of town on what is referred to locally as a 'research break'. No contact with these participants was therefore possible.

Our local partners implemented impact assessments in all four training locations:

- Yei, Central Equatoria—IPCS
- Juba, Central Equatoria—Mrs. Apollonia Mathia, Senior Editor, Juba Post
- Ayod, Jonglei—Mr. Isaiah Abraham Chan, Pact
- Bor, Jonglei—Mr. Emmanuel Deng, Pact

It should be emphasized that all four partners are Southern Sudanese and thus our impact assessments were carried out through existing local capacities and structures. This proved to be a distinct advantage in the implementation of the assessments due to our partners' familiarity with local participants (location of workplaces, communities, homes, etc.) and consequent ability to locate as many of them as possible in a short period of time. It also served as an advantage in their ability to communicate with participants in their local language. It is highly likely that respondents were more comfortable to speak openly and honestly with someone familiar, and thus less conscious of trying to please/provide the 'right' answer. The disadvantage of this method was the lack of experience of the local assessors to ask more follow-up and unstructured questions that either expanded upon or deviated from the standard questionnaire (with the exception of Mrs. Apollonia Mathia, an experienced reporter from the Juba Post). Responses also depended upon the assessors' own understanding of the question and familiarity with the aim and purpose of our training courses, which was not the case with at least one assessor, Mr. Isaiah Abraham Chan in Ayod, who was not around at the time of our training. As a result, some interesting and potentially relevant results may have been lost or not fully reflected in the responses we received.

Participants either wrote down their answers by themselves (Yei, Juba), or gave them orally which then were recorded in writing by the local assessor (Bor, Ayod). Questionnaires were delivered to the assessors electronically and BICC received responses either by email or in person during a final project workshop that took place in Nairobi (22–23 March 2007).

Findings

BICC received a total of 38 responses out of approximately 120 participants. As previously mentioned, on the whole we only received responses from civil society participants. These nevertheless include a broad spectrum of representatives from CBOs, NGOs, peace committees, church groups, *payam*¹ administrators, tribal elders, youth groups, women's groups, the fire brigades, and the media.

Some of the respondents from Juba were participants from our pilot training course in April 2006. Questions relating to the training booklets and posters are thus not applicable, as these tools had not yet been developed.

The reliability of the results cannot be asserted with any certainty, as in some cases respondents may have misinterpreted the question or their answers were written in poor English. What these responses do, however, is offer some feedback on, and provide an impression of, the potential impact of our training. They also demonstrate the need to undertake a more comprehensive and statistically sound assessment of our training activities in Southern Sudan in the future.

Questionnaires were divided into five blocks of questions and sub-questions that aimed to assess three broad objectives of the training courses (see Background on p.1):

- transfer and application of new knowledge
- transfer and application of new skills
- transfer and application of new tools (booklet, poster)

The findings within each of these objectives will be discussed in turn.

1. Transfer and application of new knowledge

Question: Have you explained SALW issues in your community? If yes, to whom? What did you explain that you learned from the course?

Approximately 79 percent of respondents had explained SALW issues to at least one other person in their community. This suggests wide dissemination of information on/awareness of SALW issues and broad application of learning from the course. In most cases, individual names of friends and family members were offered to indicate to whom these issues had been explained, showing a strong mix of formal and informal networks of people reached. While representatives of formal networks (ministry officials, church leaders, council of chiefs, etc.) are extremely important in influencing positive change, the dissemination of information on SALW control through informal channels (for example, from husband to wife and vice versa) can have an equally important impact on the safety of a community if this information/awareness is applied.

¹ Administrative level below county (Sudan>State>County>*Payam*) equivalent to local community.

"SALW collected can make people move free without fear and create proper existence of law and order." *Loliwa Luke Seuerino, IPCS, Yei County*

In terms of learning, the most common answer given to the question is the danger of SALW to communities and the people of Southern Sudan. This supports our initial impression that, while participants have experienced first-hand the dangers and destruction of SALW, they have a hard time articulating and/or expressing this danger and linking this to a lack of overall peace and development in the region. Our training courses attempted to make these points and links very clear to facilitate the dissemination of information/awareness and community involvement in SALW control. Other responses slightly vary according to location, which reflect slight differences in *foci* of the courses. For example in Yei, most responses emphasize the importance of gun collection/disarmament, while in Bor, responses indicate the control of SALW (misuse, sources of supply) as new learning.

"...[I learned] control of SALW, origin of arms supplies, reason why guns are sold and danger guns subject the communities to in Southern Sudan." *Chol Malith Kur, Ministry of Education, Bor County*

2. Transfer and application of new skills

Question: Have you engaged in program/project planning or awareness-raising on SALW control since the training course? If yes, what did you learn from the course that was most helpful to you?

The majority of respondents had not engaged in any project planning or awareness-raising activities since the training course (approximately 55 percent). This result may be partly due to the short lapse of time between the end of the courses and the impact assessment (only three months). Among the activities engaged in by those who responded positively include an SALW collection campaign in Juba, participation in public rallies and meetings with women's groups in Bor, and participation in a public awareness campaign in Rumbek. Notable among the responses on the most helpful material from the course include the importance of planning and the project cycle; how to carry out effective SALW sensitization campaigns and deliver messages to people; best approaches on how to talk to people holding guns and not willing to be disarmed; and the necessity of putting guns aside.

"...[I] learned how to approach the community that still hold guns while the government declared total disarmament." Ms. Rhoda Amer Aguto, Head of Gender Department, Ministry of Education, Bor County

"That it is possible to live even better without guns and that it is not the only way out."

Simon Makol Ayuen, Jonglei Youth Association, Bor County

"...[the] need to share the responsibility of moving forward together, not just organizations, but individuals, too." *Peter Bhab Both, SRRC, Ayod County*

Question: Have you had the opportunity to apply the training skills learned in the course? If yes, where? For whom?

Approximately 53 percent of respondents had applied the training skills learned in the course. Responses show that participants made a clear distinction between the act of training and the skills necessary to be an effective trainer—i.e. how to speak and lead effectively, use different teaching methodologies (role play, diagrams, humor, presentations, etc.) and tools (flipcharts, pictures, plays, posters, etc.)—and that these skills were applied within their daily lives. A good example is the response of a participant from Juba indicating that the skills were applied in his residential area of Munuki, Mouna for a neighbor “who was trying to threaten people with his gun.” This participant used his leadership and instructional skills to help persuade the neighbor to abandon his behavior. In Yei, participants applied the skills to mainly community members through daily office work, community meetings (in Yei, Maridi, Mundri) and CBO workshops, while in Ayod, they applied the skills in villages for youth. In Bor, the training reached more high-level people, notably because Bor County is an urban center and the capital of Jonglei State, with all State ministries and offices represented. Participants applied training skills they had learned in the following *fora*:

- In the Council of Ministers through a meeting with youth and women’s groups;
- In the Ministry of Education to officials and women’s groups through a workshop that was held by the Ministry immediately after the training;
- In the Security Committee of the State Assembly during a workshop held there, and in meetings with Assembly members;
- In Mabor cattle camp when the participant was sent there by the County to separate/address two groups of people (from Adumuot and Koch) fighting over a grazing land in Mundri.

Question: Have you had the opportunity to apply the project planning skills learned in the course? If yes, how?

An overwhelming majority (89 percent) of the participants responded negatively. This result is somewhat disappointing, as our courses in Yei and Bor focused specifically on the development of action/project plans. Incidentally, the only positive responses were from IPCS participants in Yei where there is existing infrastructure (though not necessarily enough capacity) for project development and implementation, including support from the *Aktion Afrika Hilfe*-International (AAH-I), an international NGO. While disappointing, the result is not surprising given the overall lack of infrastructure, capacity and experience of indigenous organizations in project implementation.² It should be noted that participants did not, in this case, distinguish the act of project implementation from the skills needed for project planning, as they did in the question above. For example, organizing a meeting and/or engaging in awareness-raising activities require project planning skills (i.e. problem identification, target group identification, feasibility assessment, etc.) even though the activity itself is not a project. The term ‘project’ implies the need for or presence of funding, which many of the local organizations we reach through our training do not have in the first place

² There is still a strong ‘relief mentality’ in Southern Sudan due to an over-saturation of international organizations/expatriates that implement projects without the direct involvement of local people.

to be able to engage in activities in Southern Sudan. The low number of positive responses could therefore reflect this understanding. It nevertheless suggests the need for BICC to consider providing some support, financially and otherwise, for local initiatives on SALW control to take place following our training course. This support is necessary if our goal is to promote action and build capacity for SALW control in a more sustainable way.

3. Transfer and application of new tools

Booklet

Questions: Have you shown the booklet to anyone in your community? If so, to whom? Have you distributed or lent your own copies to anyone in your community? If yes, to whom?

Have you read the booklet yourself? If yes, was the information helpful? Was it easy to follow?

The vast majority of participants (84 percent) showed the booklet to at least one other person in the community, while 79 percent distributed or lent their own copies to at least one other person. In all training courses, we gave participants more than one training booklet to take with them and distribute within their community. Responses suggest that these materials were once again spread through formal and informal networks, such as *payam* administrators, State officials, traditional chiefs and family members. In comparative terms, more respondents shared or distributed copies of the booklets than explained/discussed SALW issues in their community, which suggests that the booklets are useful tools for facilitating the spread of information on SALW control; and that this information was disseminated well beyond workshop participants.

The total percentage of respondents that had read the booklet is also high (84 percent). Only six responses were negative, some of which mentioned the lack of knowledge of the English language as a barrier to reading the material. This number is likely much higher, as the level of English spoken in Ayod, in particular, was very low. Several positive responses also pointed to the level of English in the booklets as particularly difficult, and the need to translate these booklets into local languages. Future editions should take this into consideration, as well as the inclusion of more visual graphics (illustrations, diagrams, pictures) to illustrate key concepts. The appetite for information in Southern Sudan is strong and should be met with material that can be accessed and absorbed by as many people as possible.

Poster

Questions: Has the poster been displayed somewhere in your community? If yes, where? Have you or your organization developed something similar to the poster based on the course? If yes, what? Please describe.

Exactly half of all respondents indicated that the posters distributed in the courses were displayed somewhere in the community.³ Locations of these posters include trees and walls, with one poster displayed in front of the County Commissioner's office in Bor. The posters appear to be the least popular/effective in Yei, with only one positive response out of 12 respondents. As part of the training courses in Bor and Ayod, we took digital pictures of each participant holding their own poster, which proved to be a good incentive for them to come

³ This question was not applicable to respondents from Juba, as BICC had not yet developed the posters during the pilot phase of the project.

up with their own SALW control message/slogan. Had we been able to develop these pictures on the spot, they could have been used as an awareness-raising activity/advocacy tool for state and/or *payam* officials. Future project activities should consider investing into a Polaroid camera for these and other training purposes.

In addition, very few respondents indicated with any degree of reliability that their organization had developed something similar to the poster. This is most likely due to a lack of basic materials in many areas of Southern Sudan with which to create such tools, such as paper, markers, tape, etc. Responses suggest that one structure was created out of mud and wood to demonstrate the poster, though it was not possible to clarify what exactly this structure entails (i.e. is it used to hold up the poster or to deliver a message?). Aside from posters, t-shirts are a very popular and effective tool for disseminating messages in Southern Sudan. They have a long 'shelf-life', are in high demand by the local people, and worn widely by all without discrimination (toward color, size, image, etc.). Future training activities should therefore consider the printing of t-shirts for workshop participants, as well as those reached through BICC-supported initiatives.

Other Feedback

Not reflected within the above results are three follow-up actions/activities that have occurred in Southern Sudan as a result of our training courses. These include:

- Curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education of Jonglei State on child soldiers and arms control, which will become part of curriculum for pre-school and adult/alternative education.
- Establishment of a drama group by the Ayod Peace Committee. This group aims to mobilize their communities, with a particular focus on youth, to organize and perform peace concerts in four *payams* within Ayod County. The goal is to transmit the message of SALW control through entertainment, building on the work of our training course in December 2006. It should be noted that t-shirts are being printed with BICC posters on the front to advertise the SALW control message of these concerts.
- A request from media personnel trained through a pilot course in Juba (April 2006) for capacity-building support in helping to inform the public about the dangers of SALW use and ownership, and the potential peace dividends from disarmament.

We received feedback on these activities informally through continued contact with our local partners. They indicate the need for continued engagement and support for local initiatives on SALW to meet expectations created through our presence and to sustain the outcomes of our efforts.

Recommendations

A number of broad lessons and recommendations can be drawn from the above findings:

- There is a need and appetite for information on SALW, disarmament, DD&R and the overall peace process in Southern Sudan, which has the potential to be disseminated widely.
- There is a need for both financial and material support for local initiatives related to SALW control to sustain the momentum/effectiveness of our efforts.
- Training material must be adapted for the audience concerned and include creative means of attracting/retaining attention (i.e. Polaroid pictures, t-shirts).
- Assessments need to be carried out at a greater time-span (e.g., one year) for a proper baseline to emerge.

The findings within this report provide only short-term indications of the potential impact of our training courses. A longer period of time between our training activities and the impact assessment was originally envisioned, but had to be amended due to delays in our overall project activities. In the future, assessments should be undertaken at least six months after the end of training, and preferably a year and three years after the training dates for additional details of our impact to become apparent. The challenges of this strategy are great: securing funding for such long-term assessments is difficult, particularly when multi-year funding is not available. Locating participants from courses is also a challenge that our assessors experienced only three months after our training dates. Finally, moving around from one place to another within Southern Sudan is costly and time consuming—local travel remains to be mainly by air and is subject to severe delays.

Future assessments should also draw from and collect baseline data on the local situation and level of awareness of SALW and related issues. This will help us to target the precise needs of our participants, as well as to more accurately measure the transfer of learning from our training.

Future assessments should also aim to assess whether our training influenced change in participants' perceptions, mindsets and attitudes towards SALW and armed violence. This change is vital for behavioral shifts to be sustainable, which is one of the ultimate goals of our training. Findings from the impact assessment suggest that such changes in perceptions are indeed possible from our training—awareness was clearly raised with regard to the danger and negative impact of SALW in Southern Sudan. Indicators for these changes can be identified in advance, and data collected before and after training courses for a proper measurement to occur.

Local best practices for conducting impact assessments should also be collected. These can be gathered from the experience of our local assessors, as well as other Southern Sudanese partners and experts with whom we work closely. This will help avoid situations in the future where only positive responses are collected—whether by Southern Sudanese or international assessors—and constructive feedback that more accurately reflects the reality of participants' experiences is offered. In a similar vein, an assessment strategy that is statistically sound and reliable, but which takes into account the Southern Sudan context and realities must be designed. Impact assessment strategies must also be 'localized' and adjusted according to the conditions in Southern Sudan and the many challenges that will be encountered on the ground.