

The Future of Human Security in Sudan and South Sudan

Learning from a Decade of Empirical Research

22-24 March 2016
Nairobi, Kenya

On 22–24 March 2016, the Small Arms Survey’s Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan project convened 63 researchers, government officials, and representatives from international and regional organizations for a one-and-half-day Symposium entitled *The Future of Human Security in Sudan and South Sudan: Learning from a Decade of Empirical Research*. Held in Nairobi, Kenya, and supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Juba, the Symposium marked the first time a conference was held to discuss armed violence research in Sudan and South Sudan and its relation to policies and programming on the ground.

This document provides a synopsis of the key messages that emerged from the plenary and breakout sessions and that are relevant for the field of armed violence research in Sudan and South Sudan broadly, and for the HSBA project in particular. It highlights participants’ suggestions for new focus areas for research on armed violence in both countries; ideas for improving the linkages between evidence-based research and policy and programming; and steps to enhance cooperation among different local and international actors in researching and responding to armed violence, small arms proliferation, and the demand for weapons.

The HSBA in brief

Launched in the wake of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with support from the Government of Canada and in collaboration with the UN Development Programme, the HSBA project has grown into an essential source for timely, fieldwork-based research and analysis on security issues in Sudan and South Sudan. Since its inception in 2006, the project has also received support from the US Department of State, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the UK’s Global Conflict Prevention Pool, among others. The project has published more than 50 peer-reviewed Working Papers and Issue Briefs (available in English and Arabic) that are widely read by national officials and international stakeholders. By mid-2016, the number of unique downloads of publications from the HSBA website exceeded 1.3 million.



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SYMPOSIUM SYNOPSIS

Background to the Symposium

Ten years ago it was hoped that the CPA would lead to a new era of peace, security, and development in Sudan, including southern Sudan at the time. Unfortunately, many of the challenges faced in 2006 remain unaddressed to this day and armed violence persists across South Sudan, Darfur, and the Two Areas, despite numerous peace processes and significant engagement from regional and international actors.

In the past decade, the HSBA played a leading role in providing empirical, field-based research and analysis on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, armed violence, armed groups, and the demand for weapons in Sudan and South Sudan. It has not only generated valuable new data, but has also contextualized it by providing in-depth analysis. The project's continuous monitoring function has given it a unique historical footing; its institutional and historical memory is long, informing and enriching the ongoing research agenda in both countries.

Ten years on, the Small Arms Survey and its partners felt that the time was ripe for key analysts and stakeholders to gather and take a critical look at the past decade of research and engagement in Sudan and South Sudan, to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and to identify important research gaps and future opportunities for more effective collaboration.

Agenda and discussion areas

The Symposium was divided into four thematic sessions. The first three sessions began with a plenary and then split into two breakout groups; the final session was held in plenary. Reflecting the core focus areas of the HSBA project, the four themes were:

- armies, rebels, and tribal groups;
- arms proliferation and demand;
- armed violence; and
- evidence-based security policies and programming.

Symposium takeaways

While there was no consensus outcome document for the meeting, the Symposium's organizers used the final plenary session to identify some takeaway messages that had emerged over the two days. These messages are relevant for the HSBA, the wider research community working on Sudan and South Sudan, and other engaged partners and donors. The messages include:

- In the areas of **arms holdings and demand**, it is important to establish a baseline of weapons holdings in the region as a point of departure for further research. Future security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts should be linked to holdings data in order to be relevant and useful. In this context, it is essential to focus on evolutions in weapon types observed in the field, and their effects.
- **Arms tracing** can illuminate parts of the illicit supply chain, but it has limits. The **intermediary parties** in the supply chain—and the factors that motivate them to arm non-state groups—have so far resisted investigation efforts.
- Research is needed on the **cross-border flow** of arms into Sudan and South Sudan (via Kenya, Uganda, and Libya), as well as on Sudan–South Sudan border controls that could limit arms trafficking. Establishing a better understanding of the political economy of

arms transfers and acquisition should be a goal. Given the complex challenges involved in limiting supplies to the region, a redoubling of efforts focused on **reducing demand** seems warranted.

- **‘Bottom-up’ approaches** to address small arms and armed violence should be explored. Success stories and lessons from local security policies and arrangements need to be documented and fed into programme development processes. These approaches should be combined with, rather than isolated from, top-down approaches.
- In the area of **violence data gathering and monitoring**, there are many initiatives but little coordination and few pay-offs for affected communities, and donor value has yet to be realized in this area. There is a great need to **bring together multiple sources of data** in a common pool that meets minimum standards and uses open access and dissemination methods. Doing so would address many existing challenges, including the failure to triangulate information and verify sources; the problem of respondent fatigue; and overly rigid methodologies. Such a collective project is also needed to foster a culture of data collection.
- A number of **regional considerations** came to the fore during the Symposium. It is important to **remain engaged with governments** in the region that have historically resisted independent security-related research. Collaboration between external organizations such as the Small Arms Survey and local research groups is one way of building bridges. Current shifts in macro-level political dynamics may have implications for research opportunities.

The Symposium provided a number of clear messages regarding the direction of **future HSBA project work**:

- The project’s publication stream should be supplemented by **HSBA advisory services**; in practice, that would entail more active engagement with policy and programming development bodies in national, regional, and international organizations.
- Specifically, the HSBA’s expert competencies position it to be a key supporter of the institutions established to implement the peace process in South Sudan—in particular **the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM)** and the **Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC)**—especially in the development and implementation of their monitoring mechanisms.
- Such engagement may also imply **new types of outputs and publication formats**—such as shorter, more focused policy notes on topics of specific relevance to these institutions and bodies.
- The project should continue to look for opportunities to **increase engagement with local stakeholders**, including research institutions that have significant value and perspective to add to the HSBA’s fieldwork-based investigations, their uptake, and dissemination.

Session descriptions and key discussion points

The summaries below are representative of points raised in interventions made during the sessions. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Small Arms Survey or the HSBA project.

Session 1, ‘State and non-state forces as sources of ongoing insecurity’, began with the observation that Sudan and South Sudan have rarely enjoyed a legitimate monopoly over the means of violence. Anti-government forces proliferate, and the centres of power that have at times exploited those forces have often come to suffer from them later. At the same

time, government forces, with or without the blessing of central authorities, have committed violence directly against civilian communities. Conflict between state and rebel forces has also tended to exacerbate inter-communal and inter-tribal violence. The session explored the evolving roles of anti-government and government-aligned armed groups in the conflict landscapes of both countries; state-led violence against civilian communities as a tool of war; the possible military and political endgames of current conflicts; and the track record of rebel force reintegration.

During the plenary session, the kick-off speaker noted that there was an implicit moral narrative in many accounts of what peace might look like in both countries, namely that the end goal is a single, 'good', and legitimate state that has control of the use of violence. In post-CPA southern Sudan, the emphasis was on the integration of forces. Non-state actors have been thought of as the problem whose presence needed to be resolved. But the distinction between state and non-state actors has actually done much to undermine our understanding of conflict dynamics in the region, since legitimacy is widely contested. For the international community, the post-2005 period has witnessed an emphasis on capacity building and state building without generating an informed sense of the actors involved on the ground.

After the plenary, there were two breakout sessions: one on South Sudan and the other on Darfur and the Two Areas. Following are some of the key points raised during the breakout session on **South Sudan**:

- Since 2005, no real political transformation has taken place. Decision-making in South Sudan should be inclusive going forward, and undertaken in a way that generates a national dialogue and a home-grown solution for peace.
- If the formation of the transitional government is to avoid triggering more conflict, then the various motivations of armed groups to integrate and be a part of the cantonment process or transitional government should be properly assessed.
- Consensus should be built around what a strong state should look like a) if peace prevails with the new peace agreement, and b) if it will in fact aggravate the same political, economic, social, and security conditions.
- The approach to security should be multi-dimensional, incorporate local socio-economic considerations, and foster nationwide reconciliation.
- Local approaches to security that have worked should inform and be incorporated in formal security policy.
- Local and international political backing is required for security sector reform and SPLA transformation.

Listed below are some of the key messages from the breakout session on **Darfur and the Two Areas**:

- Concerted and collective international support is required to move towards a cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the Two Areas.
- Humanitarian access ought not be a political issue. Third parties should work with the national government and rebel movements to reach consensus on allowing humanitarian aid to reach vulnerable populations.
- The national dialogue process in Sudan should reflect national interests over party interests.
- Future research in Darfur and the Two Areas should draw more on local capacities and knowledge.

Session 2, 'Getting a better grip on small arms and light weapons in Sudan and South Sudan', took as a point of departure that small arms and light weapons proliferation in Sudan and South Sudan is a legacy of protracted armed conflict and remains a key factor in ongoing inter-communal clashes and conflict between armed groups and the state. New inflows continue into both countries. But discussing arms proliferation without addressing the *demand* for weapons is futile, as demand among a range of actors is a key driver of imports, the distribution, and the re-circulation of weapons and ammunition in both countries. The session explored the scale of arms proliferation in Sudan and South Sudan; the demand factors underlying acquisition; current control regimes and their limitations; and likely preconditions for reductions in civilian small arms holdings.

The kick-off speaker provided the context for this session, noting that although we have a fairly good idea of the types and origins of the weapons in use in South Sudan, the precise supply chains remain difficult to identify. While HSBA researchers and others have not been granted permission to document weapons in Darfur, successive UN Panels of Experts have been documenting arms embargo violations for the past decade.

Both Sudan and South Sudan (and their donors) have provided major resources for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts, with disappointing results. In South Sudan, where amnesty programmes integrate rebel soldiers and their weapons in the SPLA, these efforts, while necessary, have run contradictory to the objective of DDR and military transformation. Likewise, civilian disarmament programmes over the years have yielded little, especially in view of inflows of weapons to these communities; moreover, the programmes have been extremely costly, both financially and in terms of lives lost.

The first breakout session focused on stockpiles and holdings; the second considered import issues. Following are some of the key messages from the breakout session on **stockpiles and holdings**:

- Communities exhibit a demand for weapons and ammunition due to persistent insecurity and the perceived [and actual] inability of state security forces to provide protection. Support sustained conversation with communities on their holdings and means of access.
- As a starting point for legitimizing further research, a clear baseline of weapons and ammunition holdings in South Sudan and the region should be established.
- Efforts should be made to link arms controls with the overall professionalization of state security forces and the development of security policy and doctrine.
- Additional research is needed on bilateral and regional arrangements for military cooperation, procurement, and maintenance of weapons systems in compliance with international and regional standards and legal frameworks.
- Researchers should explain sample bias when tracing arms and ammunition. Technical research should be combined with political analysis of the given context.
- The changing nature of regional threats and insecurity (terrorism, arms flows from east to west) calls for more tracing work. Additional support is required for researchers to connect the dots across regions, from the Gulf to East Africa and the Horn of Africa.
- Support towards DDR should incorporate local approaches to arms control and not focus solely on physical disarmament.
- DDR should take place as part of the overall national transformation process, one that includes reducing the size of the army, preventing a proliferation of armed groups, and supporting the reintegration process through sustainable livelihood schemes, psychosocial support, and educational programmes.
- Given the climate of insecurity, there is a need for measures such as weapons marking and locally driven approaches to community stockpile security.

- Efforts should be made to support research on the political economy of arms transfers, and especially on the diversion of public revenues and resources—including oil money, gold, and cattle—for the purchase of arms and ammunition.
- There is a need to mitigate the risks associated with post-conflict gender-based violence.

Following are some of the key messages from the breakout session on **import issues**:

- Chad, Kenya, and Uganda have crucial roles to play in curbing the flow of arms across the region and specifically in Sudan and South Sudan.
- Increased support is needed for technical measures that are designed to improve arms control, such as joint border patrols and training in physical security and stockpile management, in particular to reduce the leakage of arms from government stockpiles to non-state armed groups and sanctioned individuals.
- The arming of non-state armed groups in Sudan and South Sudan has been a major source of new weapons in existing conflicts.
- Political accommodation must be reached by both Juba and Khartoum to reduce arms flows.
- There is a need to improve the implementation and enforcement of arms embargoes, taking into account the limited applicability of the existing Darfur embargo and limited political will to implement it.
- Further research is required on weapons and ammunition supply chains. The resulting findings may provide insight into conflict dynamics, military strategy, and financial and other interests, and may serve to better inform policy development in these areas.
- Research should provide ideas on what kinds of approaches and programmes would be effective in limiting the flow of weapons and reducing levels of violence.

Session 3, ‘Identifying who is at risk—and why: Ensuring quality in both data and analysis’, began with the reflection that, in 2016, civilian victimization in Sudan and South Sudan remained in the public eye, was high on advocates’ agendas, and drew significant social media attention. In general, we know more today about the devastation in terms of loss of life, food insecurity, and forced displacement in both countries than we did before. Nevertheless, better data and analysis is needed to inform security policy discussions and, potentially, to generate accountability. The session sought ways to encourage the long-term collection of good data and the proper contextualization of gathered information, with an emphasis on building the capacities of local actors to conduct monitoring and ensuring high-quality analysis.

The kick-off speaker observed that we need to involve a range of actors in data collection, including national government institutions, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. A unified approach is needed to bring together different perspectives and stakeholders in a central ‘home’.

The first breakout session explored options for building capacities of local institutions to collect and analyse data; the second session examined ways to improve armed violence monitoring. Following are some of the key messages from the breakout session on **strengthening the capacity of institutions to collect and analyse relevant data**:

- Government-mandated institutions for data collection and analysis in South Sudan, such as the National Bureau of Statistics, lack capacity.
- Non-governmental data-collecting initiatives operate independently and are viewed with suspicion by national actors. NGOs need to involve the government regulatory institutions in order to gain access to government data on sensitive topics such as armed violence.

- There is a need to improve the sharing of sensitive information among all stakeholders, taking into consideration security and access concerns for humanitarian aid workers.
- It should be borne in mind that governments are often suspicious of the intention of armed violence surveys, and that it may take time to overcome this mistrust.
- More local and international ventures and collaboration on research and monitoring are needed.
- By sharing sensitive data with the security institutions, researchers can endanger the lives of respondents; collected data must therefore be treated in a sensitive and ethical manner.
- There is a need to improve the existing skills and capacities of the South Sudanese to use modern data collection equipment. Government security operatives should be sensitized to the use of modern systems to avoid suspicion.
- Increased donor interest in supporting data collection and research is needed. Despite donors' current strong priorities favouring humanitarian aid and access, this type of information gathering is key for future interventions.
- Research institutes should organize a roundtable discussion with and supported by donors to sensitize them to the need to invest in research and evidence-based policy and programming on armed violence and small arms issues.
- Research operations should take advantage of the existing frameworks within the African Union, the UN agenda on women, peace, and security, and the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030).
- Researchers should use robust methodologies that combine both qualitative and quantitative methods of enquiry as opposed to general numbers that tend to be less informative.

Following are some of the key messages from the breakout session on **armed violence and monitoring**:

- Data collection methodologies should be harmonized and a culture of information sharing should be developed between state and non-state actors.
- Government structures and institutions should be reconstituted for data collection.
- Data collection and analysis processes need to be funded and supported financially and technically.
- The Transitional Government of National Unity should operationalize institutions that are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement.
- In-depth research should be conducted to probe into the new conflict dynamics in South Sudan.
- Data collection should be action-oriented so as to inform government decisions and actions.

Session 4, 'Moving towards evidence-based security policies and programming', started with the concept that if the ultimate aim in our collective work is to inform evidence-based policies and programmes that protect human security, save lives, and promote development, linkages between empirical research and the development of security programming should be strengthened. In Sudan, the relationship between the state and the empirical research community is fraught with resistance and suspicion; in South Sudan, despite major donor engagement, current governance structures inhibit the translation of sound data and analysis into policy responses. This session sought concrete steps forward for research and policy actors given these realities.

The kick-off speaker noted that developing linkages between empirical research and security policies and programmes is particularly challenging in Sudan and South Sudan due to

persistent and recurrent conflicts and insecurity in many parts of the countries, poor governance, and widespread access to arms. It is particularly important for programmes to be designed and implemented on the basis of reliable, detailed, and up-to-date contextual assessments, and to be very realistic about their planned outcomes and resilience in the case of setbacks.

Following are some of the key messages emerging from this session:

- Research needs to enable assessments of dynamic contexts, conditions, and risks; it should use customized, as opposed to generic, designs.
- It is important to respect all formal protocols with respect to national and provincial state authorities and to recognize where decision-making authority rests and how it is exercised.
- Systematic efforts should be made to extend and improve modes of engagement with both official and unofficial policy-makers; by international donors and all research projects and associated researchers. In this context, lessons learned and experiences from other countries can be instructive.
- It is important to recognize the roles of *informal, customary, or traditional* security governance institutions in Sudan and South Sudan, and to involve them more meaningfully in armed violence reduction and security-building programmes.
- There is a need for better collaboration and coherence between international researchers and local research institutions; at the same time, funding should be made available for capacity building and training of local experts and organizations in South Sudan and Sudan.

Feedback

Participants were asked to provide feedback at the end of the Symposium. The feedback was overwhelmingly very positive and many echoed the importance of such a gathering in terms of the opportunity created to discuss key issues with colleagues and decision-makers. Participants appreciated the chance to network and engage more deeply on issues both during and between sessions. They noted that it was particularly useful to be able to share different views on issues of human security in the two countries with a diverse group of people. Content-wise, participants observed that it was perhaps too heavily focused on South Sudan at the expense of Sudan; they also said that we might have allocated more time to the breakout group discussions and had more women present. Overall, however, participants found it was a great success.

Looking ahead

As the HBSA project moves into its second decade, it will consolidate the suggestions and discussions from this historic gathering. In collaboration with its partners both in Sudan and South Sudan and abroad, the project is already evolving to meet the increasing need for sound, objective, peer-reviewed data and analysis, while seeking new ways to ensure that research findings find a firmer place in policy and programming circles. In particular, the Symposium served to bring a number of particular research and advisory goals into sharper focus, and provided much-needed impetus to begin to design initiatives to realize those goals. There remains as much—or more—need for the project's work in 2016 as there was in 2006, and the Symposium provided an important contribution to mapping the way ahead.