

Gaps and Trends in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs of the United Nations

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Demobilizing combatants is the single most important factor determining the success of peace operations. Without demobilization, civil wars cannot be brought to an end and other critical goals – such as democratization, justice and development – have little chances for success.

(UN High Level Panel, 2004)

Since the first Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) program of the United Nations (UN) in 1989 (in Central America), DDR of combatants has for 17 years been part of almost every UN post-conflict engagement. Throughout this time, various UN agencies, as well as other international organizations, have applied different approaches to DDR with varying success.

This article seeks to provide a short overview of the issue of DDR. It will highlight some terms and definitions, will describe some of the problems and lessons learned in DDR implementation, and show some of the new evolving structures and integrated measures for future DDR interventions.

What Is DDR?

DDR can be both: either the classical post-conflict disarmament and demobilization of state armies and rebel groups, or the downsizing of an oversized military a long time after the end of a conflict. Parts of DDR measures can be also included in *Security Sector Reform* (SSR). However, most of the past and current DDR programs are part of a

peace-building effort, most of the time under the auspices of the United Nations.

Although the concept of DDR shows clear sequencing, sometimes phases have to run parallel or in different order. Especially the disarmament phase has proven to be difficult to implement if the peace agreement is not adhered to by the warring factions or if the perception of insecurity keeps the people from giving up their guns.

Although each DDR program might adopt different activities at different stages, the UN has come up with main definitions of DDR phases:

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs.

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks).

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance.¹

¹ Source: Note by the Secretary-General on administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of UN peacekeeping operations, 24 May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31)

So far, the first two phases were mostly implemented through encampment or cantonment sites which can cause trouble. Those camps, meant to keep the combatants for only five to eight days before the reintegration activities begin, often turned into a month-long logistical nightmare because of the delay of donor money and institutional resources for reintegration.

Because of these problems, DDR practitioners pushed the UN and the donor community to allow what is now called *Reinsertion*, i.e. support before the reintegration programs are established. The according definition of *Reinsertion* reads now:

The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion. Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.

Nevertheless, long-term reintegration continues to be the hardest part of DDR which needs commitment and a lot of resources. In addition, training and employment opportunities are often rare for all groups in post-conflict societies. Reintegration, at least economically, is easier with “civilians who took up guns” like in Croatia than with long-term soldiers or combatants who joined at a young age (so called child soldiers – or *Children Associated with Fighting Forces*, CAFF).

Although almost all international organizations and donors, as well as researchers stress the importance of successful DDR, the implementation of DDR programs so far has often failed to fulfil the high expectations

not only of the international community but also the partners in the field, including the ex-combatants themselves.

Various actors are involved in DDR programs: the main implementing agencies within the UN System are the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) and the UN Development Program (UNDP), furthermore the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the World Bank. But also bilateral development agencies such as the German GTZ, DFID, and USAID have implemented parts of DDR programs. Too many actors have led to duplicated structures and efforts, as well as lack of coordination in the field.

In addition, DDR as a sub-issue very much reflects the new complexity of Peace Operations where military and civilian components are more and more obliged to communicate or even cooperate for successful peace-building. But *Civil-Military Cooperation* (CIMIC) or *Civil-Military Coordination* (CMCoord) remain very sensitive issues for humanitarian and development actors inside and outside the UN System.

DDR in UN Peacekeeping Operations

The following table presents an overview over current UN DDR programs in strong or weak states with a PKO in place or not.

TYPES OF UN DDR PROGRAMS		
	Peacekeeping Operation (PKO)	No PKO
Strong state	Government-run DDR National DDR Commission part of the overall DDR Unit of UN Mission Integrated DDR Mission: DPKO in the lead for DD, UNDP for R <i>Examples: Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Sudan</i>	Government-run DDR UNDP technical assistance and capacity development Possible UNDP execution of sub-components of DDR program <i>Example: Angola</i>
Weak state	National policy-making body with UN Mission-executed DDR Integrated DDR Mission: DPKO in the lead for DD, UNDP for R <i>Examples: Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Sierra Leone</i>	National policy-making body with UNDP-led interagency and NGO execution or direct execution UNDP direct execution <i>Examples: Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Somaliland</i>

Source: UNDP Practice Note DDR, 2005

Most UN DDR programs currently operate in weak states, which means that DDR programs often also have to establish basic state structures to actually implement DDR. Two thirds of all beneficiaries of current DDR assistance are in Africa.

Some Gaps and Failures of DDR Programs

As mentioned above, the gap between the two Ds and the reintegration phase were often too long, sometimes up to 24 months. This led to frustration, violence, or even re-recruitment in DD camps. With the new measure *Reinsertion*, which can be financed from the peacekeeping budget, this gap might finally be tackled successfully.

In addition, mandates of UN Missions were often formulated without the involvement of a DDR specialist, and were therefore often not realistic: The kind of support promised by the mandate could not be delivered as donor funds were either less than expected or coming in much later than predicted. However, the number of DDR advisors at DPKO and UNDP has grown, and they are now always included in PSO assessment missions.

Examples like Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast have shown that there was a lack of regional coordination and a lack of awareness of the interdependencies of DDR programs in neighbouring countries. News of different benefits travelled quickly, such as different payments for guns which increased illegal transfers of weapons. Although this problem has been identified, regional coordination in DDR programs is likely to continue to depend upon personalities rather than structures.

Labour intensive work in reintegration phases mostly benefited male combatants. In addition, women were often not on the lists which commanders provided to the DDR commissions, although the numbers of female fighters were sometimes very high. Special provisions to solve this problem were made but, again, their success very much depends on the willingness of the UN-personnel implementing the programs.

Another problem in past and current DDR programs is the issue of “benefits for perpetrators”. Social tensions arise when ex-combatants with a war crime record receive cash or reintegration support while other parts of society receive nothing or less. New, so-called *Community-*

based Approaches, now try to link DDR programs to wider community rehabilitation programs.

New Trends

In recent years, DDR practitioners, as well as UN agencies have pushed for an improvement of DDR, its content but also its structure. This development can be put under four headings:

- Integrated DDR
- Comprehensive DDR
- Voluntary DDR
- Gender Mainstreamed DDR

Integrated DDR consists of the development of the *Integrated DDR Standards* (IDDRS) which foster an institutional integration both at headquarters and in the field, as well as a thematic one, by linking it to health issues, security sector reform, and economic issues just to name a few. But it also encompasses a stronger geographical integration by taking into account cross-border issues such as arms, combatants, and refugees.

DDR has been at the forefront in the current UN reform towards integrated mission planning which brings together even personnel and budget lines of UNDP and DPKO, such as in Sudan.

Comprehensive DDR tries to acknowledge not only the demand side of the small arms problem but also the supply dimension of disarmament. It combines disarmament measures with legal and infrastructure aspects of arms control. Disarmament is seen as physical and psychological disarmament, to reduce violence and enable a culture of peace. This means not only to take the weapon from the individual but to try to understand what weapons mean in a given culture or society.

Voluntary DDR: DDR is often seen as the cure for everything. But it can not be stressed enough that DDR can only succeed when it is a voluntary

process. The DDR concept is based on voluntary participation. Although disarmament by force is possible it has not been very efficient in the past. However, all other activities under DDR programs can not be implemented by force. All parties have to agree to DDR measures, to benchmarks, deadlines, etc. Although there has been a request for a DDR program in Lebanon this is not a feasible option as long as the Hizbollah refuses to take part in such a program.

Gender Mainstreamed DDR tries to correct some of the misperceptions of how to apply gender perspectives to program design and implementation. Gender in DDR does not mean women's empowerment only, although this is an integral part of DDR programs. Applying gender perspectives means to look into the socially constructed images of what it means to be a man or a woman in a given society in order to deliver tailor-made benefits and support programs which can foster gender equality and improve gender relations. For that reason, DDR programs need to analyze gender relations, provide gender-balanced personnel, collect data disaggregated by sex, and come up with specialized eligibility criteria for participation in DDR programs. One example of an issue previously neglected in DDR programs is male violence. To know more about the roots of male behaviour can be crucial when it comes to maintaining DDR camps, but also in dealing with the issue of domestic violence.

Room for Improvement

Although much has happened in recent years there is still room for improvement when it comes to DDR programs. Macro-level analyses are still lacking: which structures in the fields were successful? Which ways of coordination with local and international agencies succeeded? A multi-country comparative study could provide crucial information on these topics for future programs.

The same is true when it comes to micro-level analyses. So far, not enough has been done to identify what actually worked for the

individual combatant to reintegrate socially and economically. The Conclusions of some first “tracer studies” in Liberia and Sierra-Leone are currently being implemented, but they need to be applied to other countries too.

A third area is training: most of the time the UN personnel deployed into DDR missions has no experience with the issue. Although the IDDRS provide a helpful tool for learning in-mission training, additional training courses are needed to answer the growing demand for experienced DDR personnel. The newly established network of training institutions, the *Integrated DDR Training Group* (IDDRTG), might be a timely response to this requirement.