

THE DDR PROCESS³⁵

In the ritual calendar of events for peace processes, as reflected in numerous Security Council resolutions and mission mandates, the key to stabilization and security has always been seen as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The unstated purpose of such stabilization measures has been to wrest power and the means of violence from local militias and warlords and to recentralize it at a much higher level. In other words, the success of the whole peace process has hinged on the degree to which warring factions can be effectively disarmed.

However, disarmament has been one of the most difficult tasks to implement. It has been extremely hard to collect all weapons, even at the end of an armed struggle, when the remaining conditions of insecurity create high incentives for the maintenance and acquisition of small arms. And the challenges of reintegration – mental and psychological disarmament – have been even greater. In Côte d'Ivoire, DDR is seen, and is being implemented as a national process, but one which involves strong international and regional partnerships.

The National Programme for DDR

The National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilisation Reinsertion/Reintegration, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (NPDDR/RRR) defines the implementation mechanism, political and legal framework, as well as the financial and management guidelines for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. The National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) is in charge of the NPDDR and oversees the whole process. DDR is one of the most important aspects of the peace process, and it consequently is the most contentious.

The NCDDR is made up of 25 members from the ministries of Economic Planning, Defence and Security, Lands and Employment and Social works. Other members of the Commission also come from FANCI, the Gendarmerie, the police, the *Forces nouvelles* and three special advisors to the Prime Minister.

The framework governing the DDR programme is the Linas-Marcoussis

Agreement, which stipulates that the Government of National Reconciliation, created as a result of the Agreement, shall, "immediately after assuming office...undertake the process of concomitant regrouping of the forces on the ground, under the supervision of ECOWAS and French forces;" and that, following this, "measures [are] to be taken with respect to disarming and demobilizing these forces, also under ECOWAS and French forces."

All fighters recruited after the failed coup of 9 September 2002 are to be disarmed and demobilized. Exactly 30,000 fighters are slated to be disarmed and demobilized (about 4,000 fighters from the South, 25 to 30,000 from the North). Each disarmed individual will receive \$900 subsistence payment, or "safety allowance", to sustain them for an estimated six months period of reinsertion. The DDR programme is an almost exclusively national-controlled programme, with its basic principles constructed by the warring parties, and flowing from the Ivorian experience of war and peace. The Transitional Government provides 50 per cent of the funding required for the programme. 40 per cent is to be covered by a World Bank loan, and 10 per cent is to be provided by EU and other bilateral donors.

A database for the process will be harmonized with those of Sierra Leone and Liberia to prevent combatants from these other countries crossing over borders to disarm in Ivory Coast, which has a more generous "safety allowance" package. It is not a weapons "buy-back" scheme - the distinction is important, for obvious reasons.

Disarmament and Demobilization are preceded by several months of sensitization, made easier by the limited psychological damage due to the relatively short duration of the Ivorian conflict. The setting up of a UN radio station, which will be on the air soon, will greatly aid this process, as it could be used extensively to inform and sensitize both the public and the combatants to be disarmed on the positive aims and development of the process. Fortunately, the psychological impact on both combatants and civilians is more limited than, for example, in Sierra Leone or Liberia - due to the short duration of the conflict and actual combat operations.

The disarmament and demobilization phase of the programme is meant to be completed within five to six weeks. Military developments have so far outpaced the political ones in the development and implementation of the peace process. The DDR programme will culminate in national Presidential elections, slated to be held in October 2005. There will then be a phased withdrawal of all foreign forces - now under UN command - from the country.

In the Ivorian context, the DDR programme has institutional, political and

defence/security dimensions. The institutional dimension entails the respect for the constitutional legality and government of National Reconciliation, while the political dimension focuses on the peace process, including fidelity to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the Accra II agreement and the guidelines provided by the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement follow-up committee. The Defence and Security dimensions concerns the restructuring of the national defence and security forces into a single force. FANCI does not have a specific role in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process but is supposed to collaborate with UNOCI and support the NPDDR in the DDR process.³⁶

There has been solid progress thus far, thanks to widespread international support for the peace process. The DDR programme was clinched with the successful conclusion on 9 January 2004 of the Yamoussoukro Agreement on the Joint Operational Plan and Guidelines for the DDR programme, which had been drawn up by FANCI, Force nouvelles, and the neutral forces. The Plan defines all military actions that should take place in the DDR process. In addition, a contact group, made up of 8 officers of FANCI and 8 officers of the New Forces, has been established, and monitoring and evaluation processes are in place for the DDR process.

FANCI and the armed wing of the Forces nouvelles have shown commitment to implementing the DDR plan. A simulation exercise on disarmament was undertaken on 20 February 2004. The exercise was witnessed by the Prime Minister, Seydou Diarra, who at the end, announced 8 March 2004 as the indicative date for the commencement of the programme.

The visit of the UN Electoral Assessment Mission from 26 January to 6 February 2004 raised expectations over the possibility of a steady pace towards organizing the preparations for the 2005 elections under the vigilant supervision of the United Nations. This general feeling was reinforced by the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1528 (2004) authorizing UNOCI, which generated optimistic hopes of peace keepers supporting the implementation of DDR, the reunification of the country and assisting in the conduct and organization of the 2005 elections.

However, several negative developments were looming on the horizon, casting a deep shadow on the peace process and the implementation of DDR. The President's plan to visit Bouaké in February or March 2004 was aborted for reasons of insecurity, and in the face of the vehement protests by the Forces nouvelles. The date of 8 March 2004, announced by the Prime Minister as the start-up of the DDR programme, had to be postponed indefinitely due to political objections by the Forces nouvelles.

Constraints and opportunities

Despite the elaborate planning, incorporating lessons from similar processes in Africa, and inclusive nature of the NCDDR, there remain several significant constraints to successful implementation of the DDR programme.

The first and most important has been political: the inability or unwillingness of the ex-warring parties to fully implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. Accusing President Gbagbo's government of bad faith, the *Forces nouvelles* insist that they will not cooperate with the process - which is to say, disarm their combatants - until after the elections. Related to this has been public impatience with the apparently slow pace of the programme. In the initial stages of the process, the DDR programme was hampered by complicated bureaucratic procedures which had been set as prerequisites to govern the process.

There have also been financial constraints. These have had to do with restrictions and prerequisites set by donors. Donors and bilateral partners have many prerequisites in the area of feasibility studies, quick-impact DDR projects, and procedures for recruitment. There are constraints related to bidding, as well as constraints in relation to the rehabilitation of DDR sites. Fortunately, in Côte d'Ivoire, the government has already pre-financed many of the requirements.

Under the Joint Operation Plans, FANCI were expected to return to barracks while the police and gendarmerie were to ensure internal security of lives and property. UNOCI were put in charge of disarmament and are expected to disarm the rebel forces. However, circumstances have dictated that the police and gendarmerie continue to provide security in the southern portions of the country in collaboration with the impartial forces (UNOCI), while security in the north of Côte d'Ivoire is provided by the police, gendarmerie and the New Forces.

The implementation of the DDR programme has been held in abeyance due to political bickerings. Although its practical implementation remains to be seen, it should be noted that DDR starts with planning and preparation, and sensitization - not with disarmament, as is always assumed. A well planned DDR is much preferable to a rushed DDR programme that is likely to fail.

On the positive side, the New Forces seem to be quite prepared to cooperate with the NCDDR, despite the blockage of the DDR process on the political level. A positive contribution is also to be expected to come from the UN Radio station which will be on air soon. It was recommended that the station should be used extensively to inform and sensitize the population and those to be disarmed.

The whole western African region should be concerned with the harmonization

of DDR programs for a more efficient implementation. This includes the harmonization of databases for national programs, as well as special projects to avoid the risk of ex-combatants crossing borders to benefit from other DDR operations. There is also a need for continued and expanded knowledge and experience sharing between all DDR programs across Africa.³⁷ Participants agreed that successful DDR will make the decisive difference between peace and a return to war in Côte d'Ivoire, but also acknowledged that DDR is a voluntary process, that cannot proceed as long as the political impasse persists.