

INTRODUCTION

In the past few years we have witnessed an evolution in the conceptualization and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes by the wide range of actors who are drawn into such activities: broadly speaking the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, donors, technical assistance organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Africa in the past thirteen years has been a testing ground for new planning and implementation of UN-led DDR programmes. From Mozambique in the early 1990s to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire today, the learning from each mission has influenced the outcome of the next. Some countries, such as Liberia, bear witness to earlier failures of DDR, as its current DDR programme attempts to not repeat the mistakes of the earlier ECOWAS and UN efforts at DDR ahead of the August 1997 elections. The commitment of the UN to learn from its implementation successes and failures was restated in the Brahimi Report of 2000. This thorough review of UN peace and security activities since the end of the Cold War questioned whether or not "traditional" peacekeeping had a future. While challenging, many of the reports recommendations have been adopted in peace mission planning at the UN. At the same time, a review of UN DDR operations was undertaken and issued as a report of the UN Secretary-General in 2000. This report argues for a targeted approach to DDR, with the former combatants the primary focus for interventions. The report suggests that DDR should be developed in concert with larger programmes for national recovery but DDR itself should not become the societal vehicle for post-conflict peacebuilding.

Recent DDR efforts in Africa led by UN peacekeeping missions, such as UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone), UNMIL (Liberia), UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire), MONUC (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and most recently ONUB (Burundi), have clearly benefited from the recommendations generated by these earlier reports. However, as DDR is viewed as beneficial, it has also become a delivery vehicle for more ambitious and wider interventions, often stretching the capacity of the UN mission, national agencies and donor support. Thus a key question arises: has DDR become a victim of its own success?

Since 1989, an essential element of almost all peacekeeping operations has been the process of DDR, as the success of an entire peace process can hinge on the degree to which warring factions are effectively disarmed and demobilized.

Disarmament has been one of the most difficult tasks for peacekeepers to implement. Attempts at coercive disarmament, such as in Somalia, have failed and it is widely accepted that DDR must be a voluntary process that requires absolute cooperation and compliance from belligerent parties. But it has been extremely hard to collect all the weapons, even at the end of an armed struggle, when the remaining conditions of societal insecurity create high incentives for the maintenance and acquisition of small arms and light weapons by former combatants and the community at large.

Demobilization and reintegration also pose challenges – both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative dimension is the tangible side of the process and can be measured by counting the number of soldiers reporting to assembly areas, turning in weapons and being relocated. This aspect has been the main focus of peace operations and is used as a measure of effectiveness in reports to the UN Security Council.

The qualitative dimension is harder to grasp and has to do with reversing the indoctrination of militaristic ideologies and values, including violence as a

means of conflict resolution. Demobilization needs to be comprehensive enough to uproot the instruments and organization of violence, in addition to the ideology of violence. For reintegration, there are qualitative indicators that can be used but are often overlooked. For example, many African countries lie near the bottom of the Human Development Index and Probable Quality of Life Indicators. Most African rebels have therefore experienced poverty and injustice as normal realities of life and these are often the motivation for joining a rebellion. For such people, reintegration can seem to be a surrendering of principles and ideals for life in a society that is plagued by deep and seemingly intractable problems.

Recently, there has been a move by the international research community and the UN itself to better understand the modalities of DDR programmes and to understand what contributes to the success of one programme or the failure of another. The motivation for convening the workshop was to better understand and document the factors in DDR programmes that encourage or inhibit the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

By bringing representatives from UN agencies, UN peace mission personnel, research and training institutions, multilateral financial organizations and civil society together, workshop participants had an opportunity firstly, to reflect on what has been learned to date from the implementation of DDR programmes and secondly, to challenge the conventional thinking on how each segment of the DDR process should be run.

Thus the objectives for the workshop were to use the expertise of DDR planners and practitioners to summarize what has been done successfully – and unsuccessfully – in DDR programmes in Africa and to identify orthodoxies that may need to be challenged. This was done in the context of putting forward ideas and suggestions to feed into ongoing efforts to make DDR as strong a contribution as possible to preventing the resurgence of armed violence in countries emerging from war.

This report provides a reflection of the discussion during the workshop of the need for DDR and the effective coordination of DDR efforts with other strategies aimed at assisting war-affected countries in their process of national recovery. Where general agreement among participants was clear on key areas these are noted, as are areas where there was not, perhaps, wide agreement but a strong recognition that further information and analysis are required.

The content from presentations and the outcomes of the discussion sessions are presented under the following six thematic areas:

- Trends in DDR in peacekeeping in Africa
- Planning and coordination in DDR programmes
- Disarmament and demobilization
- Reintegration
- Working with special groups
- Multi-actor coordination

These are presented in the report largely as discussed, however the authors have tried to bring in examples to illustrate concepts and practice from current UN missions in Africa. Although the workshop was not designed to generate specific recommendations, these naturally arose during our discussions. These are reflected in the final section of this report.