

SECTION 2

PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The planning and coordination of DDR has been streamlined by clearer planning and implementation procedures by the UN. However the “on-the-ground” realities still pose challenges to those tasked with ensuring that DDR moves smoothly.

DDR, peace processes and troop deployment⁴

Since the 1989 UN mission in Namibia (UNTAG), DDR has been part of the evolution of the doctrine of peacekeeping. Today UN missions deploy with increasingly specific DDR mandates.

The role of the military during DDR programmes

One of the major weaknesses of the UN deployment system during peace support operations (PSOs) is the lack of consideration of country size when a decision of troop size and force is undertaken. The force size depends on the budget that the Security Council is willing to approve, and also on the resources available from troop contributing countries. Thus the dynamics and history of the conflict and the size of the country often play a secondary role.

The initial phase of DDR involves a survey of where belligerents are located and what road networks and transportation options are available. The distance between cantonment sites should ensure rapid reaction if necessary. The

credibility of the peacekeeping force, a robust mandate and enough resources to support the implementation of the mandate are extremely important.

With regards to weapons collected from former combatants, stockpile management and arms control during the mission is also important. It is essential that the mission is able to safeguard all surrendered firearms and ammunition. Arms destruction has become an integral part of the DDR process. Other actors should also be brought in during the disarmament phase, especially where the mission lacks the resources and expertise to destroy arms, such as in the UNAMSIL mission, where GTZ undertook the actual destruction of the weapons.

The National Commission for DDR (NCDDR) and others providing timelines for DDR to other central actors, such as the UN military mission, should ensure that these are feasible so that expectations can be managed during the DDR process.

Task of the military

During the early development of PSOs, the major task of the military was to protect and monitor the ceasefire line. Today, protection of civilians is important and part of mission responsibilities. Force protection remains important, but protection of cantonment sites and other UN agencies is also the responsibility of the military in the mission.

Coordination

DDR involves a multiplicity of actors - from rebels, government, UNDP, UNICEF and the NCDDR, to non-governmental organizations - making regular communication and coordination critical. Periodic meetings should be held with the NCDDR to identify needs and priorities. The changing

dynamics and politics of the peace process dictates that such meetings be used to monitor implementation, sustain momentum and encourage the commitment of all actors to their obligations to the DDR and peace processes.

Lessons from troop deployment

Better coordination among stakeholders in the DDR process has improved the delivery of DDR programmes. However, complications can still arise, especially if local conditions differ greatly from expectations and plans. Thus the need for regular communication and coordination is critical.

The lack of accurate data for numbers of combatants is a constant problem. Armed groups may not declare the number of combatants under their command, and it is easy for the number of individuals registering for reintegration benefits during disarmament and demobilization to mushroom. The lack of accurate data also complicates the collection of arms and ammunition, as up to six people may claim to share one weapon, simply to benefit from the DDR programme. Suggestions for better identification of combatants should be considered, for example stripping a weapon to show competency.⁵

Militias who are outside the peace process (and therefore generally exempt from UN-mandated DDR programmes) pose a unique challenge. Sometimes they want to be included in DDR but the UN cannot accommodate them. Other times they can be spoilers of the peace process, raising insecurity among parties to the peace agreement and stalling activities. More space within mandates to accommodate working with these groups may need to be considered.

The size of a country and the nature of the conflict has an enormous impact on mission size and troop deployment. Too often the mission size is drawn to

meet the availability of troops and not to the needs of the country of deployment. The lack of troops or changes in the security situation can have an impact on the DDR timetable and more integrated planning between troop deployment and DDR should be considered.

The capacity of NCDDRs may be limited, as a variety of people are drawn into the process to deal with issues ranging from the political to the operational and even grass roots levels. Providing training for NCDDR personnel on programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation could assist in this regard.

Troops deployed in missions often engage in local-level projects to work with communities. Examples include building schools, assisting with agricultural projects and renovating roads and water sources. These projects should be evaluated to identify lessons on what contingents can do that will contribute to national recovery strategies.⁶ In principle, these projects should be sustainable once the military contingents have left, and focus on transferring skills to local communities.

Translating policy planning into on-the-ground realities⁷

To effectively translate policy to implementation, two stages are critical: planning and execution.

In Liberia, a DDR Action Plan has been developed with the different stakeholders in the peace process. This document states clearly that responsibility and political commitment will determine the success or failure of the effort. It must be noted that during peace processes, especially when transitional governments are in place, issues related to power sharing are very sensitive and can have a significant impact of the delivery of mission responsibilities such as DDR, and this factor can delay the implementation of these activities.

In addition, political commitment for the sustained funding of DDR activities, such as the construction of DDR sites, provision of vocational tools and health care, are crucial to the success of the mission. It is important to take cognisance of these needs as frequently “plans are made but cannot walk” due to a lack of funds. Delays in the disbursement of funds also affect operations, and delays in delivery of commitments to former combatants, local communities and others can affect the stability of a region or country.

Operational concerns

As UN mandates for peace missions expand in scope and scale, the mission on the ground feels the pressure. For example, including provisions for the protection of civilians requires adequate material and personnel resources. An example of where the UN was unable to respond was during the recent invasion of Bukavu by Nkunda's forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Spreading troops more evenly across the country (or in those areas with the greatest need) limits the possibility for ex-combatants to migrate to other locations and conflicts.

Most UN missions experience problems in adapting and making logistical adjustments to operations when the situation demands it. There is therefore a need for regular communication between DPKO, mission headquarters and mission commanders on the ground. Such communication and coordination ensures that there is an acceptable level of reaction on the part of the entire mission.

Disarmament and demobilization camps (D1 and D2 camps)

The selection of campsites for disarmament and demobilization is important and can be critical to the participation of former combatants in the process. There is also a need to think through what use the camps could be put to after the UN withdraws. For example, are they located where communities can benefit if they are turned into social service centres? Ensuring the proper location of UN resources can also be an important link between DDR, the general mission mandate and national recovery imperatives of the host country.

Pressure from and on the host country and the international community can result in the DDR Plan being implemented before appropriate structures are in place. This was alleged to have been the case in Liberia in December 2003 when the SRSG insisted the mission go ahead with disarmament at a time when others were saying the mission was not ready. This led to a flow of ex-combatants from cantonment centres, who had nothing more constructive to do than engage in rioting and seriously destabilising the peace process.

Lessons from practical experience

The current mission in Liberia provides examples of what can go right and wrong during the implementation of a DDR programme. Some practical challenges relate to the identification of participants in the DDR programme: What are the criteria for eligibility in a programme and how are adequate records maintained and information shared? How can standards on who should be classified as “special groups” be better shared and the agencies responsible be identified? These criteria need to be agreed by all actors who are involved in the identification and selection process. What guidelines can be developed to assist with the repatriation of foreign combatants?

The challenge of combatant identification remains. If missions continue to rely on lists generated by the commanders of the armed groups, we will continue to have disparities between the number of weapons surrendered and the number of registered ex-combatants – is it possible for three people to share a rifle?

Lists provided by commanders are often inconsistent and are clearly used to exploit the DDR process. For example, people may agree to pay the commander part of their reintegration benefit if they are put on the list. Alternatively, the fighters with the most experience and who are most able to spoil the peace process may remain outside the DDR process by not being listed. This undermines the entire concept of DDR.

Often, post-DDR communities have high concentrations of former combatants, frequently in cities or large towns. They are there because economic prospects are perceived as brighter than in the hinterland, but their numbers swell the ranks of the already unemployed (including many IDPs), and this means that there are never enough jobs to go around. In large concentrations, this can be destabilising and affect the ability of cities and towns to provide basic services to the inhabitants. Can the urbanization phenomenon be checked?

The reintegration of former combatants requires the sensitization of communities to accept the former combatants, and of the combatants to accept the community. There is a need for better guidelines on how this can be done, by whom and how the process can be monitored.

The vocational training offered to former combatants needs to be reassessed. Often in Liberia, combatants are making choices based on short-term monetary considerations rather than taking into account longer-term needs. It has been shown that counselling on job skills and opportunities can influence skills choice – can this be improved?

The focus of DDR is sometimes lost in the desire to complete each activity. The objective should be to dismantle military structures for the belligerents and replace these with viable political structures and accountable systems of representation that will provide a peaceful avenue for the pursuit of individual and collective aspirations. Can experiences from other countries be used to develop guidelines to monitor whether or not this is occurring?

While waiting for DDR to commence, fighting forces will move off in search of other opportunities – including employment as fighters in neighbouring countries. How can implementation of DDR be changed to ensure that this does not happen?

Communication, media and public awareness⁸

The media plays a critical role during the post conflict period in any country. The media operate in the public sphere and participation of the public is largely voluntary. The media can be one of the first elements of society disrupted by violent conflict and, even prior to this, parties seek to control the media in order to influence news and opinions in their own interests. Peacebuilding, once it begins, also often takes place in a highly charged and unstable media environment, where information is scarce and often suspect.

Thus an integrated approach to peacebuilding, which takes into account the positive role the media can play, is important. The media can be used to channel information and foster public opinion in favour of supporting peace processes and building reconciliation.

For example, following the first attempt at DDR in Liberia during December 2003, UNMIL increased its radio announcements and communication outreach activities to address the ignorance of local commanders and communities on what constituted the DDR process, what benefits were available and how their participation would be structured.

Public Information in Liberia

UNMIL launched a nationwide DDDR information campaign, involving the UNMIL Public Information Section, DDDR, the force, and military observers, as well as:

- UN agencies;
- Combatants especially generals from ex-GOL, LURD, MODEL;
- NGOs, such as LINNK, WIPNET, Christian Children's Fund, Don Bosco Homes, Save the Children, and World Vision; and
- Traditional communicators - Flomo Theatre, Musicians Union of Liberia, and "Boutini" comedian.

The UNMIL Public Information Section leads on these efforts and works in support of all mission components, military and civilian. The main targets of public information are the general public, former combatants, and the international community. The main tools used are community outreach, radio, and working with the local and international media. Messages focus mainly on issues of peace and reconciliation, as well as disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration. UNMIL Radio broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing news and information on the peace process. The UNMIL radio signal currently has the farthest reach of any radio station in Liberia.

As is the case in any field, each country poses its own challenges with regards to the local media and any media strategy needs to be aware of and sympathetic to these local contexts. For example, the UN Preparatory Mission to Sudan reported in December 2003 that the "UN operation will require a robust and independent capacity for public information, in order to provide impartial messages about the peace process in general and the UN role in particular. Gaining the consent of the parties for the UN to communicate freely, with its own mass media assets (especially radio), is essential; this element should be included in the comprehensive peace agreements and the eventual mandate from the Security Council."

In contemplating the role of the media in peacebuilding, it is important to take advantage of all possible entry points and to think creatively of ways to use the media. Radio is generally the most influential medium during war and during peacebuilding. It is cheap to produce, has a wide reach and radio receivers

are portable and powered by batteries. The UN has started using information campaigns to complement its peace missions, for example Radio UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, Radio Okapi in the DRC and recently UNMIL Radio in Liberia. In Liberia, the mission is concurrently running a skills-enhancement programme for local journalists.

Lessons from media, communication and public awareness

An evaluation of media interventions in peacebuilding is needed. This would provide important indications of good and bad practice in the development and running of these programmes and identify guidelines for future efforts.

It is important for the UN to be balanced in its engagement with the media and to not appear elitist or selective. The relative importance of the UN cannot be underestimated. For example in Liberia, UNMIL is the biggest source of advertising revenue in the country.