

## SECTION 3

# DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION<sup>9</sup>

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United Nations efforts relating to disarmament and demobilization have advanced considerably. It is acknowledged the weapons are political bargaining tools and have significance beyond their function. In addition, certain DDR concepts have developed normative status and form the core platform for disarmament and demobilization efforts.

The objectives of any disarmament intervention should be to:

- *Remove the tools of violence:* Collect, control and dispose of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants, as well as from the civilian population to prevent the eruption of armed violence and communal conflict.
- *Reduce tensions and demilitarize politics:* The insecurity generated during conflict stems from threats posed by SALW circulating in the conflict area. The availability of weapons increases the odds of combatants resorting to them to address problems rather than using dialogue and negotiations.
- *Restore the power monopoly of the state:* Limit access to and usage of arms to legitimate security forces in an environment of respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

One of the key challenges however is in the identification of who should be disarmed. Thus, over the long term, a strategy of disarmament and arms management should encompass everybody bearing arms without legal

authority. However, during DDR processes, necessary prioritization means that belligerents as defined in a peace agreement must be disarmed. Community arms collection programmes can later be brought into consideration to disarm those outside the peace process.

Once there is clarity on those who are to be disarmed (and in current situations this is rarely clear until disarmament is underway), the process of disarmament needs to be determined. This should include the following steps:

- The broad process for disarmament is specified in the peace agreement;
- Planning is undertaken at the UN level to identify stages and processes for gathering information on force numbers, locations, force commanders, and others whose participation is critical to the success of the disarmament and demobilization stage.
- A decision is made on whether voluntary or coercive disarmament is necessary. Although the failure of coercive disarmament in Somalia and elsewhere has caused the UN to shy away from this as a method of disarmament, it may be wrong for coercive disarmament to be rejected out of hand. If voluntary disarmament is favoured, a decision must be taken on what, if any, incentive will be used to encourage participation (see challenges below).
- A decision on the process for registration, reporting, encampment and disarmament. For example, belligerent groups can report together and be disarmed individually. Modalities for collecting information on combatants and verifying the status of combatants must be decided at an early stage.

The timing and location of disarmament becomes the next issue for consideration. Often, when to disarm is stated in the peace agreement, although these timelines are frequently unrealistic and unachievable. There may thus be a need for mission planners to produce realistic and achievable

timelines, reflected in the mandate and well publicized. The principle, however, is that disarmament should take place at the earliest time possible, as delays can undermine confidence building measures, frustrate belligerents and may prompt their return to the bush to fight. However, care should also be taken to ensure that the necessary planning and preparations are made at reception centres so that the combatants can be processed smoothly and quickly.

There is ongoing discussion on the need for and duration of cantonment. As DDR programmes have broadened to include groups associated with the fighting forces (but not combatants), such as porters, cooks, wives and abductees, cantonment sites have become relocation centres where large numbers of people overwhelm the military troops and structures in place to deliver food, health care and process former combatants. However, cantonment for armed fighters is important, as it forms a critical stage in the sequence of demobilization and demilitarization necessary to move from a combatant to civilian mentality.

In terms of the identification and disbursement of reinsertion benefits, the following observations and suggestions are made.

The first is that DDR is suffering from being viewed as a moneymaking process and, most problematically, weapons are viewed as commodities that the UN will purchase for cash. While it is necessary to identify the benefits that former combatants will receive and communicate these to the affected groups, this process must be decoupled from the disarmament stage of the process.

Secondly, the immediate safety and physiological needs of combatants enrolling for DDR must be taken care of. This may also include confidence-building measures, such as buffer zones, secure corridors, mutual observation and regular communication between and among the belligerents. Reinsertion packages, social and medical assistance and reinsertion allowances may also help provide for the physiological needs of the former combatants.

Medical/psycho-social support and counselling is also important. Combatants may have been exposed to all kinds of health hazards and psychological abuse. Some, if not all, are exposed to disease (including STDs), suffer from drug addiction, or have experienced rape, torture and abduction.

Third, the needs of combatants should be analysed to identify their profile and opportunities available to them in the various communities or resettlement areas. The excessive focus on vocational training should be rectified by the identification of training in skills that are needed at a community level and can be absorbed within the economic profile of the country. For example, training in teaching, social work or basic medical care could help bring skills back into communities.

The demobilization phase leads naturally into reintegration. While demobilization often takes place in a militarized environment, it is important for demobilization planners to recognise the need for demilitarizing the mindset of the combatants to assist their entry into reintegration training programmes.

#### **ECONOMIES AROUND DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILIZATION**

In recent years, it has been recognized that many individuals have become quite adept at refurbishing old weapons to turn in for cash. A UNICEF study found a young man in Liberia with the uncommon name of Mozart who was able to go through the disarmament process numerous times in order to get cash for his 'weapons'. This highlights the need for better screening and registration processes to prevent further lapses in the programmes. Care should be taken to ensure that it is not those with the means to buy their way or those with the knowledge to con their way into the programmes who benefit, while many of the neediest are left out.

## **Challenges of disarmament and demobilization**

*Conflict complexes and regional dynamics:* The effective demobilization of former combatants very much depends on stability in neighbouring countries.

For example, on-going efforts to harmonize DDR programmes in West Africa have been necessitated by the easy movement of people, weapons and goods across the conflict region. The Great Lakes region has also been recognized as posing a specific challenge, one which coordination between MONUC and ONUB, as well as the Greater Great Lakes Regional Strategy for Demobilization and Reintegration seek to address.

*Restoration of confidence between belligerents:* Demobilizing former combatants in an atmosphere characterized by a lack of trust, transparency and communication can undermine confidence in the DD exercise. Restoring confidence between belligerents who may end up in the same security force or the same community is essential.

*Voluntary nature of disarmament:* The current political will for disarmament extends only to voluntary disarmament. Although disarmament may be stipulated in the peace agreement, as well as a Security Council resolution, and therefore be considered mandatory, incentives to encourage participation are often used. Non-cash based examples include weapons for food/goods approach or weapons in exchange for development projects. This compromise might be necessary but should not be accepted without question in every situation. In cases where people refuse to disarm, diplomatic pressure may be the first option of eliciting compliance after which some enforcement measures could be used.

*Planning for reform of the security sector:* While there is debate about whether former combatants should form part of the security sector, the need to re-establish the security sector is recognized as important in most countries. Thus a national plan for security sector reform should be developed that relates to the DDR process so that any decision on integrating former combatants into the security forces can occur smoothly and without delaying the DDR programme, as has occurred in the DRC.

*Creation of political space:* If the reasons that led to war included the marginalization of specific groups from the national political scene, planning to constitute political parties as an avenue for political aspirations should be explored.

## **Lessons from disarmament and demobilization**

DDR has become a money-making process for participants. Ex-combatants have equated DDR processes with making money by selling weapons. While a weapons buy-back programme may have a perceived short-term benefit as weapons are collected, the longer-term drawbacks are greater and include increasing the value of weapons and drawing more weapons to the area to be sold. Combatants may also stay out of the DDR process in order to traffic weapons.

The failure of disarmament and demobilization of former combatants has been a real concern, given the possibility of a recurrence of conflict. Reintegration of former combatants into society and back to their normal way of life, however, depends very much on a successful DD programme. An answer to what constitutes adequate preparation for reintegration therefore remains crucial to the entire DDR process.

The disarmament of the wider society (or at least regulated control over weapons) is a desirable outcome of a DDR/community arms collection programme that leads to a national arms management approach. While the formal process of disarmament and demobilization may be quite short, this does not mean that all weapons have been recovered or that all armed groups or individuals have participated. Thus, processes for complementary disarmament efforts should be considered, such as in Sierra Leone.

Pre-deployment training for those who will be undertaking DDR in peace missions would be very valuable. Training institutions which offer DDR courses, such as KAIPTC, should consider whether they could assist in developing such programmes to provide for pre-deployment as well as generic DDR training.