

## SECTION 4

# REINTEGRATION – DEFINING A NEW APPROACH<sup>10</sup>

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Does the current practice of DDR reduce conflict? If the perpetrators of violence are not taken out of the equation, potential conflict is torpedoed back into the centre of any new political establishment.

Another approach to demilitarization is the implementation of demilitarization through existing command structures as part of security sector reform (SSR), thus absorbing some combatant divisions into a national army or police force. Although this approach was successfully implemented in Europe following World War II, it is not appropriate for internal conflicts between non-state actors, where violent exploitation may characterize wartime and the immediate post-war period. Within these loosely organized groups, any form of bureaucratic evidence regarding combatants and units is highly unlikely. Yet these informal structures enable the manipulation of the DDR process, as the command structure of these units hijack demobilization resources, but fail to demobilize core combatant groups.

This is the case in Liberia today, where DDR is structured in such a way that commanders provide the lists of combatants to UNMIL through the NCDDR. Thus the previous perpetrators of violence have become the gatekeepers of the DDR programme, a development that was also observed during the first DDR attempt in Sierra Leone, in 1999. Access to DDR lists also provides political power as the commanders are able to gain supporters for future democratic elections.

In such circumstances there is the need for military intelligence to verify commanders' lists of combatants and to identify core combatants before DDR is started. A good test in terms of numbers might be to compare the wartime estimates of military strengths with the numbers enrolled in the DDR process. However, even here there is a blurred line between actual estimates of fighters and 'hard core' combatants.

For example, the actual number of 'hard core' combatants in the Liberia conflict from 1999-2003 numbered about 10,000; the UNMIL planning figures for DDR in early 2004 came up to 38,000 combatants; and to date UNMIL has disarmed over 50,000 combatants, with the expectation that the number will grow by an additional 10,000 before the DDR process is completed.

The current DDR programme in Liberia has largely failed to demilitarize 'hard core' combatants, like Taylor's former body guards (the State Security Service, SSS), who have a history of committing atrocities and exploitation and are still operating on the streets without being subjected to any SSR process. Considering that a rather high number of hardcore combatants has never been subjected to DDR, one might wonder how much closer the DDR programme has moved towards actual demilitarization.

The predominant focus of DDR on the reduction of weapons throws up problems regarding the definition of a combatant, as weapons have been common currency in countries like Somalia and Liberia and thus do not qualify as a parameter for defining combatant status. In addition, the cash payments for weapons attract a wide range of youth who need the money to access food, education and health resources, especially in the absence of parallel reintegration initiatives.

Overall, disarmament alone will only prevent weapons circulation in the short term and thus an effective DDR programme must focus on the more difficult

goal of demilitarization through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants.

Consequently there is the need to combine the demilitarization of combatants with a broader recovery strategy for the victims of violence through:

- Intensive DDR focused on small group of 'hard-core combatants', who have been identified through gathered intelligence during and after the conflict.
- More widespread assistance (through DDR or other means) to include relief and rehabilitation of a majority of the war affected population.
- Broader weapon collection programmes linked to relief and rehabilitation through a general amnesty, for example.
- Political control of DDR in the hands of a civil administration.

## **Participatory role of national and local communities in the reintegration process**

Reintegration should not be understood as an individual process, but rather as a community orientated process, as the respective host communities are playing an important role in the reintegration of the returning ex-combatants. For example, the DDR process in Uganda followed a holistic reintegration approach.

The Ugandan government carried out the demobilization and reintegration of more than 36,400 ex-combatants in the National Resistance Army (NRA), through facilitating the social and economic reintegration of these soldiers into civilian life. In addition, Uganda incorporated traditional peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives into the overall DDR structure.

Local communities have a key role to play in the successful reintegration of former combatants and they should be informed about the ongoing DDR developments through exposure to 'real life examples' of people who are directly affected by DDR. Again, Uganda was used as an example where ex-combatants went on the radio to tell their own story, thus reaching more people than the official press briefings. Local reconciliation customs and practices should be supported and incorporated into the overall structure of DDR programmes. This would require better access of funds to local communities and could include direct international funding towards local communities. Within this context the symbolic value demobilization and demilitarization of combatants can have for local communities should be recognized and, in some cases, the establishment of reconciliation processes such as truth and reconciliation commissions should be supported.

In terms of national ownership and control of DDR, the DDR process in Côte d'Ivoire underlines the importance of national ownership in formulating and implementing reintegration programmes. The national commission of Côte d'Ivoire decides the relevant steps in the DDR process with the support of the international community.

## **Multi-agency initiatives**

DDR also needs to link up with existing recovery frameworks (e.g. refugee resettlement, relief and development initiatives such as interim Poverty Reduction Strategies), to enhance the success of the DDR programme. Cooperation between DDR and development initiatives are important elements in enabling parallel processes of social and economic integration and demilitarization. Joint approaches that were practised in Burundi and the Republic of the Congo were given as examples.

## **Rethinking existing reintegration procedures**

Commanders and combatants need to go through different reintegration procedures. Further, the need for military intelligence to differentiate between combatants and criminals is critical as this can result in different reintegration measures (supportive or punitive).

While the weapon criterion is still dominant for identifying combatants, it may not always be appropriate. Weapons collection is a short-term aspect of demilitarization and a broader framework is needed for long-term demilitarization and reintegration of ex-combatants, if the weapons are to be permanently taken out of the equation.

Regarding the reintegration of combatants into the national army through a general security/army reform, such absorbing measures should only be applied in cases where the ex-combatants represented only a small group of people, for example in Burundi. El Salvador was introduced as a positive example for a successful UN mission (ONUSAL). In El Salvador, the economic and social reintegration of ex-combatants was effectively implemented through an extensive land transfer programme, where ex-combatants became farmers.

The commanders of fighting forces are often considered part of the group of ex-combatants and not recognised for the unique responsibility they hold. It is important therefore to identify special treatment of commanders, as the reintegration of commanders and unit decommissioning are key elements of strategies for security and future stability. This is explored in more detail in Section 5.

## **Lessons from reintegration**

It was recognized that comparatively little is known about reintegration in DDR, and especially about the long-term effects of reintegration on national recovery. Although there are instances of “bad” DDR and a few of “good” DDR, the qualitative information necessary for better analysis and development of guidelines is generally lacking.

However, it is recognized that effective DDR must include the state of peace, human rights and security in society to ensure success of long-term reintegration procedures, and that civilian authority needs to control DDR programmes.