

# INTRODUCTION

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The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) underlines how a crisis in a country can directly affect another country or an entire region, sparking off regional insecurities. It is for this purpose that conflict analysts argue that responses to African dilemmas must be based on a sub-regional context where local dynamics are paramount. No solutions designed away from the local dynamics can be implanted on a local conflict with any hope of success.

The central pillar to the establishment of peace is a successful disarmament programme. Disarmament, in the context of DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration), can be defined as the collection, control and preferably disposal or destruction of small arms and light weapons, explosives and ammunition held by organs of regular and irregular combatants. Disarmament targeting mainly small arms and light weapons is often referred to as practical or micro-disarmament.<sup>1</sup>

Disarmament, in the context of peacekeeping, and as defined by the United Nations (UN), is the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. It includes the development of responsible arms management programmes. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO)<sup>2</sup> gives broad objectives for DDR planning. For disarmament specifically, emphasis is put on the need to:

- Define who is to be disarmed, and what weapons are to be collected (definition of what constitutes disarmament).
- Develop procedures for disarmament, such as timing, methodology for weapons collection, recording, disposal and location of sites among other necessities.
- Undertake detailed disarmament planning at the beginning of a DDR process, which is essential for smooth implementation and for successful

reintegration of former combatants. A general consent (particularly in voluntary disarmament) of representatives of the state and all parties to the conflict is vital.

The disarmament plan should further incorporate:

- Procedures for monitoring and verification of compliance.
- Broader weapons considerations, including enforcement of an arms embargo and/or cooperative measures with neighbouring countries and arms suppliers.
- Elements of a public information programme, for the purpose of sensitizing the public on issues of disarmament and the entire DDR programme.
- Information needs for planning disarmament and stockpile management of recovered weapons.
- Funds needed for the disarmament phase.
- Other relevant considerations.

Disarmament can be conducted in various ways. It can be administered voluntarily through disarmament agreements, amnesties and public collection campaigns administered by a police force, army, a peacekeeping force or a designated authority. It can also be carried out coercively by the army, police or a peacekeeping force in situations where the combatants are reluctant to down their arms in the interest of peace. The need to avert human atrocities from taking place, and to prevent the reoccurrence of the 1994/95 Rwandan crisis,<sup>3</sup> is what prompted the United Nations Security Council to pass resolution 1493 on 28 July 2003. The resolution provided the UN peacekeeping force in the DRC (MONUC) with a stronger mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. (See chapter four for a deeper analysis on MONUC). The new mandate gave MONUC powers to enforce peace, hence the ability to undertake coercive disarmament, whenever necessary.

Studies reveal that disarmament conducted by peacekeeping missions of either the United Nations or regional organizations does not lead to complete elimination or collection of proscribed weapons. This is often because immediately after a conflict the feelings of insecurity among the public linger as the healing process and confidence building develops. During this period

some people will still feel the need to be armed and will not easily give up their arms. Post-demobilization verification exercises conducted by peacekeeping missions have sometimes revealed large quantities of weapons that remained either in hidden storage sites, arms caches or in unauthorized private hands.<sup>4</sup> Arms often remain unreported because the parties are not entirely confident in the peace process and hold back some of their best weapons for a possible renewal of hostilities.

A disarmament process should not be an afterthought or *ad hoc* process, but rather part of a DDR programme resulting from peace negotiation and peace implementation processes. According to Mason, disarmament and demobilization are important components of reform of the state security apparatuses and should be pursued in tandem with reform of the military, police, judiciary and penal systems; reforms which in return become part of the broader process of democratization through the creation of a multi-party electoral system that is underpinned by effective and accountable governmental institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Resurgence or increases in banditry, violence and other forms of criminal activities in post-conflict areas can be partly attributed to the ready availability of weapons. In order to help reduce criminal acts and consolidate the peace and stability necessary for the promotion of sustainable development, it is imperative that mechanisms for collecting weapons are developed and implemented after the peacekeeping operations have withdrawn. At the conclusion of disarmament, a law against the illegal possession of arms should be promulgated.

Disarmament should serve to free up more resources and create better conditions for the economic development of the country. One of the criteria for judging a disarmament process is to see whether it facilitates economic growth of the targeted population, particularly of the entire target country in order to provide a basis for the successful demobilization and reintegration of the former combatants.

Human security, defined as an approach that recognizes that lasting stability cannot be achieved until people are protected from violent threats to their rights, safety or lives,<sup>6</sup> needs to occupy the central part of all disarmament approaches, with the aim of replacing the possession of arms as a means of security and defence, power and a tool of survival with viable and sustainable alternatives. This requires cultivation of a new security concept that meets the needs of society and calls for vigorous efforts to explore new ways to safeguard peace and security.

During a disarmament process, inter-party consultations and negotiations by all parties concerned are essential. However, as Cilliers and Malan argue,<sup>7</sup> the danger is not insignificant, as underlying the seemingly insurmountable challenges of effective disarmament and reintegration of combatants are far broader and deeper social, political and economic challenges that need to be met if peace is to involve more than those armed elite, who may present themselves as liberators and purport to act in the interests of a generalized population. The two concede that disarmament requires a massive process of social engagement and mobilization of peoples and communities whose only experience of governance (during the conflict) often was brutal, corrupt and exploitative.

In a conflict with multiple actors, as in the DRC, it must be ensured that the disarmament process does not become a tool for stronger groups to control weaker ones. Still less should disarmament become an instrument by which a handful of the parties seek to optimize their armament at the expense of others, in order to seek unilateral security, superiority or domination of the country's political arena. Considering the fragility of the DDR process, a disarmament plan should avoid any bias that could affect the outcome of the peace building process. The presence of impartial forces, such as UN peacekeepers or forces of a regional body, may assist in ensuring compliance during disarmament and also in post-conflict reconstruction.

Chapter one of the monograph evaluates the evolution of the concept of disarmament in the post-Cold War era, highlighting the factors that have underpinned UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the challenges and lessons learnt from previous efforts at disarmament in Africa.

The second chapter builds the first by tracing the evolution of peace support operations (PSOs) and assessing Western countries' political will to intervene in African conflicts. The chapter ends with an evaluation of emerging challenges that peacekeeping missions face during disarmament.

Chapter three presents an overview of how disarmament was carried out in Sierra Leone under the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This has been seen as a model of successful disarmament in Africa and has served as a 'how it was done in a sister country' model for the DRC, as the latter plans its disarmament programme. The announcement in February 2004 that the five-year programme of disarmament and demobilization was complete in Sierra Leone provides the hope that stability will be sustained in the country.

Chapter four captures the major events that have helped shape the DRC, putting the country back on the track to peace. Citing the findings of field research conducted in the DRC, the chapter contends that the transitional government is indeed motivated to achieving peace, although it is inevitable that political challenges will emerge. Thus the need for disarmament, as an important component of post-conflict reconstruction becomes paramount. The chapter concludes with observations that may add value to the entire DDR process in the DRC as it is implemented.

The monograph concludes with a review of the fundamental requirements for planning and implementing disarmament programmes. The conclusion puts forward some suggestions and recommendations for initiating the DDR process in the DRC

## Notes

1. See R Muggah et al., "The Long Shadow of War: Prospects for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in the Republic of Congo - A Joint Independent Evaluation for the European Commission, UNDP and the MDRP Secretariat," 23 February to 6 March 2003, p.20.
2. See United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in a Peacekeeping Environment: Principles and Guidelines, December 1999, p.15, [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/DD&R.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/lessons/DD&R.pdf).
3. Many peacekeepers risked and some gave up their lives to protect Rwandan citizens during the genocide. Belgium, citing the lack of mandate to use force in the conflict, withdrew its contingent following the murder of Belgian soldiers assigned to protect a Rwandan government leader. For a full account of this story see T M Mays, "African Solutions for African Problems: The Changing Face of African-Mandated Peace Operations," *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Centre for Conflict Studies, New Brunswick, Spring, 2003, pp. 106-125:109.
4. The BICC help desk for practical disarmament-social and political aspects, <http://www.bicc.de/helpdesk/aspects.html>.
5. P Mason "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: Changing Perspectives in Development and Strategy," in H Wulf, *Brief 15-Security Sector*, BICC, June 2000, p.40.
6. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.
7. J Cilliers and M Malan, *Peacekeeping in the DRC-MONUC and the Road to Peace*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, Monograph series No. 66, 2001, pp. 11-13.