Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR): A Practical Overview

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The end of the Cold War was a contributing factor to the end of many intra-State conflicts in Latin American and African countries. These countries used the fledgling concept of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) to disband former warring factions, downsize their national armed forces, and provide both sides with short- to medium-term alternate civilian employment. Unfortunately, the end of the Cold War also contributed greatly to the supply of cheap, easy-to-use weapons and ammunition, which encouraged or facilitated other conflicts. Some of these conflicts have continued for multiple years — even decades — and are now seeking resolution of a broad range of contextually different civil conflicts by further application of the concept of DDR to disband and disarm guerrillas, irregular armies, and armed groups, and to sustainably reintegrate former combatants.

In the transition period following a civil conflict, there is a host of actors involved in the overall transition from war to peace in a country. These include the former warring factions, different local and national government personnel and ministries, and regional power players as well as a host of external actors; factions (such as former colonial powers); regional power blocs; and international actors like the United Nations, donors, and non-governmental organizations.

A DDR programme is but one of the many programmes that run concurrently at the outset of a peace process. Proper phasing and prioritization for these programmes are key. DDR programmes are multidimensional and include a host of social, economic, political, military, and/or fiscal objectives that are part of the overall peace and recovery strategy. Social and economic objectives may include early recovery initiatives and equitable and sustainable development. Political objectives include democratization and stability. Military objectives might include a smaller and more affordable armed force that meets the new security needs of the country. Fiscal objectives include debt and deficit reduction and improving the balance of payments.

DDR is most often seen as a process in which the technical steps of disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration are not distinct phases but rather a continuum of transition from military to productive civilian life. During each of these phases, the needs of ex-combatants (XC) are different, and different support measures are required. Experience demonstrates that demobilization and reintegration must be thought of as a single, continuous process. Planning for both sets of activities must be connected and coordinated to avoid fragmented, uncoordinated efforts. In early DDR programmes, reintegration activities were often carried out in isolation from other stages of peacebuilding efforts. While this was mostly well-intentioned in the short term, it resulted in weak, unsustainable programmes that frustrated those they intended to serve.

The stages leading from war to peace (peace negotiations, demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration) are interdependent. The objectives of each stage can be achieved only if/when the objectives of the other stages are also achieved. This applies in particular to the cases of reintegration and demobilization. The development of forward and backward linkages between each stage, therefore, strengthens the peacebuilding process and ensures a smoother transition to peace. As all peacebuilding stages are linked to one another, the negotiation stage is critical. Ideally, demobilization and reintegration would be planned as part of this peace process and should be planned well in advance and made part of the negotiation package. Donor support should be sought as early as possible after the accord is signed (or even when it appears imminent) to obtain funds needed for the reintegration of ex-combatants. In designing reintegration programmes, it is necessary to keep in mind the dual nature of reintegration — of urgency and development — to develop efforts closely coordinated with the rest of the peacebuilding and peacemaking processes. Dividing the war-to-peace period into successive stages does not reflect the actual interrelations existing between the different stages, yet there
are significant challenges and difficulties. Experts can identify most reintegration options only after gathering information on disarmed soldiers through the demobilization process. Demobilization, on the other hand, may be dependent upon the further incentives offered by reintegration programmes.

Each actor has a different timeline or programme phase with which they are most concerned. Some groups are primarily concerned with the immediate security objectives of a programme. These entail the immediate pacification of combatants so an election and political transition can occur in a fixed period. Typically, peacekeeping contingents, some donors, and some incumbent leaders fall into this category. Other groups have a longer-term perspective and view the economic, political, and social reintegration of ex-combatants as a key to future stability. These groups argue that reintegration is a prerequisite for implementing the terms of the peace accords, consolidating the peace process, and preventing a recurrence of the conflict.

The organizations, communities, and individuals supporting DDR have different perceptions of the priorities, goals, and scope of the reintegration process. It is therefore not surprising that the programme components they recommend and the resources they offer often differ — and sometimes clash. Groups are likely to disagree on when reintegration programmes should begin and when they need to be prepared and ready to implement. They will differ on the extent of programmes and the needs of demobilized soldiers. They will have different views about the end point of reintegration and about indicators of success. Planners of reintegration programmes should define their objectives in advance so programming can be specifically designed to fulfil those goals. How success is defined will vary according to the needs of the affected country. Defining success and agreeing on the indicators that will be used are important steps in coordinating the activities of those supporting the process.

Designing DDR programmes, obtaining funding, and preparing to implement them can be a lengthy process. Even after reintegration programmes are implemented, it takes time before they begin to sustain ex-combatants. This suggests that DDR should be a phased process extending over many months. Those managing the process may be concerned mainly with security. If soldiers can be moved through camps or discharge centres quickly, demobilized, and dispersed, then the peacekeeping missions are less costly, and security problems can be managed more easily (for the short term). Some planners involved in early missions believed that reintegration programmes had to be ready by the time ex-combatants left the camps. This left little time to prepare sophisticated reintegration programmes. In some cases, the different time horizons and priorities of the many groups involved in planning clashed so much that the extended debate paralyzed action, threatened donor commitments, and greatly delayed programming and implementation. Realizing the difficulty in this transition, others encouraged a holding pattern once the forces were disengaged, reducing the pressure and allowing for planning to take place after properly surveying the actual forces on the ground.

The differing perspectives of the urgency versus development dilemma are not necessarily incompatible. Both views can be accommodated if planners coordinate their activities. The period immediately following demobilization should be seen as a transition or reinsertion stage that precedes reintegration. Alternatives to holding patterns can be some form of immediate assistance package provided to soldiers leaving initial disarmament and demobilization camps. At the same time, demobilizing soldiers can be informed about reintegration programmes that will follow. Ex-combatants need to know about interim steps, when the programmes will be available, and how they can access them. This will help to sustain ex-combatants until reintegration programmes take effect, while providing the time needed to prepare adequate programming. The knowledge of programmes still to come may help pacify ex-combatants who might otherwise give up.
on the peace process and turn to banditry or extremism. There is also a risk of frustrating expectations if programmes are repeatedly delayed or fail to materialize.

DDR is an inherently political process and is most common in the aftermath of wars or protracted civil conflicts. These conflicts often weaken political institutions and disrupt political processes. Returning a large number of young men and women to civilian life can further destabilize politics. The ex-combatants may be drawn into political extremism if their expectations are frustrated. The way in which soldiers are reintegrated, the areas in which they settle, the benefits to which they are entitled, and the way they form associations will affect the political process for years after demobilization. The success or failure of DDR programmes is intertwined with the progress of political reconciliation. Strong commitment and cooperation from the leadership of armies and their political leaders are necessary for a successful implementation of DDR programmes.

There is no single model or blueprint for DDR programmes. Case studies can only offer lessons and recommendations that might increase the chance of success. Each DDR programme must be tailored to the actual political, security, economic, fiscal, and social context of the country. The objectives of the many actors involved in supporting programmes must be reconciled to these realities.

Just as there are no programme blueprints, there are also no universal institutional arrangements for designing and implementing programmes. Past programmes have arisen from many different organizational arrangements. They have involved many combinations and levels of participation and decision-making by the Host State and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. The burden of planning, coordinating, and obtaining funding for implementing and monitoring DDR programmes is a challenge, especially for countries emerging from protracted conflict. It is further complicated if political authority is in doubt pending a later election. Partisan quarrelling and the need to clear decisions with both the government and non-government parties may delay programmes and planning. Governments may lack the necessary administrative capacity, financial resources, and technical capacity to design and implement programmes. The establishment of one civilian agency or national commission with overall design and implementation responsibility serves this purpose best. The managing organization must have a combination of centralization and decentralization — centralized control and decentralized implementation. Field offices provide easier access to beneficiaries and contribute to making the programme more responsive to local needs.

Conclusion

The transition from civil war to sustainable peace is a difficult one. Successful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants is essential for this transition. While the objectives of DDR are broad, it must be carefully planned and executed to enhance security, support development, reduce government expenditures, and remove impediments to democracy. DDR should be viewed as a holistic process, not discreet steps. The success of any programme to support DDR is closely linked to the political, economic, and security situation of the country where it occurs.

-Mr. Cornelis Steenken, 2017.
Method of Study

This self-paced course aims to give students flexibility in their approach to learning. The following steps are meant to provide motivation and guidance about some possible strategies and minimum expectations for completing this course successfully:

- Before you begin studying, first browse through the entire course. Notice the lesson and section titles to get an overall idea of what will be involved as you proceed.
- The material is meant to be relevant and practical. Instead of memorizing individual details, strive to understand concepts and overall perspectives in regard to the United Nations system.
- Set personal guidelines and benchmarks regarding how you want to schedule your time.
- Study the lesson content and the learning objectives. At the beginning of each lesson, orient yourself to the main points. If possible, read the material twice to ensure maximum understanding and retention, and let time elapse between readings.
- At the end of each lesson, take the End-of-Lesson Quiz. Clarify any missed questions by rereading the appropriate sections, and focus on retaining the correct information.
- After you complete all of the lessons, prepare for the End-of-Course Examination by taking time to review the main points of each lesson. Then, when ready, log into your online student classroom and take the End-of-Course Examination in one sitting.

Access your online classroom at
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- Your exam will be scored electronically. If you achieve a passing grade of 75 per cent or higher on the exam, you will be awarded a Certificate of Completion. If you score below 75 per cent, you will be given one opportunity to take a second version of the End-of-Course Examination.
- A note about language: This course uses English spelling according to the standards of the Oxford English Dictionary (United Kingdom) and the United Nations Editorial Manual.

Key Features of Your Online Classroom

- Access to all of your courses;
- A secure testing environment in which to complete your training;
- Access to additional training resources, including multimedia course supplements;
- The ability to download your Certificate of Completion for any completed course; and
- Forums where you can discuss relevant topics with the POTI community.
This chapter provides an introduction to some of the key issues involved in the concept and context of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants (XC).

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- Section 1.2 Context of DDR
- Section 1.3 DDR Terminology
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- Section 1.7 Security Concerns of Demobilized Combatants
- Section 1.8 What is a DDR Programme (DDRP)?
- Section 1.9 Security Threat Posed by Ex-Combatants (XC)
- Section 1.10 Impact of Past Programmes
- Section 1.11 Conclusion

**Lesson Objectives**

- Explain the purpose and context of DDR.
- Identify the main components and characteristics of DDR.
- Understand the post-conflict environment as it pertains to ex-combatants and DDR.
In many respects, the range of activities that fall under the heading of “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)” is as wide as the global scope of the United Nations system itself. In the early days after a cessation of hostilities, DDR can serve as a vital confidence-building measure. DDR features prominently in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In the last few years, we have also seen...
that DDR is just as crucial for peacebuilding, as reflected by the increasing references to DDR tasks in integrated peacebuilding missions. Not to mention the reintegration of ex-combatants, which is closely related to wider early recovery and development processes. In the twenty years since the first peacekeeping operation with a DDR mandate was established in Central America, we have seen that DDR is an important tool for countries emerging from conflict to pave the way for sustainable peace, recovery and development. I am proud of my colleagues in the entire United Nations family engaged in DDR activities — from peacekeeping operations to special political missions to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes who are playing crucial supporting roles in advancing the ultimate objectives of the United Nations.¹

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

**Section 1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to some of the key issues involved in the concept and context of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants (XC).

Disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration activities play an important role in modern peacebuilding operations. Most comprehensive peace agreements (CPA) incorporate DDR activities, which provide a flexible framework for initiating the separation and concentration of forces, commencing the delicate job of disarming and demobilizing armed factions, and returning or reintegrating XC back into society.

The conditions around DDR operations have increased in complexity as new threats and circumstances emerge. While DDR programmes vary according to the context, it is important to note that DDR does not function in a vacuum — it functions as part of a larger peace operation that includes other socioeconomic, political, and security reforms. Thus, a DDR programme must take into account these other issues, and DDR practitioners must plan, design, and implement programmes within a wider recovery and development framework.

Section 1.2  Context of DDR

A DDR process is part of the larger framework of the transition from war to peace. A DDR programme is a time-bound, finite series of actions that focuses on disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating back into society an armed group or groups of armed individuals, their supporters, and their family members with the overall objective of reinstating the State monopoly of violence. A successful demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programme (DDRP) appears to be a key component of an effective transition from civil war to sustained peace.

DDR has always been in a state of flux depending on the context of the conflict and the nature of the peace. While no two DDR processes are the same, DDR practitioners can learn and adapt some lessons for use in subsequent DDR Operations. The United Nations Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), developed from 2003-2006, did just that. The IDDRS collected lessons learned from the 1990s through the mid-2000s to provide guidelines for future DDR operations. While the IDDRS provides a helpful tool and reference for DDR, gathering a consensus on updates to meet the changing dynamics of DDR has proven difficult.

Different “Generations of DDR” that take into account the growing scope and mandate of DDR offer some updated guidance for DDR practitioners and planners. Academics and practitioners are reviewing many aspects of DDR, including the effectiveness and impact of programmes, with an aim to measure success. This is a challenging endeavour, as DDR is only a portion of the overall peace process, and it is often difficult to credit DDR activities with a successful outcome when they are interlinked with other peacebuilding initiatives. The lack of a clear definition of success presents another challenge. Is success the absence of war, or is it a reintegrated combatant? What is a successful reintegration? Regardless of the definition, accurately measuring how DDR contributed to the outcome is challenging.

Section 1.3  DDR Terminology

Disarmament

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian
population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.²

Disarmament is taking weapons away from soldiers. Individual soldiers give up their personal weapons, ammunition, and associated equipment before demobilizing. Similarly, demobilizing units surrender their heavy weapons, vehicles, and other equipment. Weapons and equipment may be destroyed or reallocated according to the terms of a peace agreement. "Micro-disarmament" refers to the collection, control, and disposal of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and the development of responsible arms management programmes. Responsible arms management includes reducing the production, procurement, and transfer of arms and enacting regional measures to restrict the flow of weapons across boundaries.

Disarmament may be the first step of the DDR process and occur in the same place as demobilization, but this is not always the case. In some cases, weapons are put beyond use, stored, or even destroyed as armed individuals or groups turn them in. Some groups may see disarmament as the equivalent of surrendering, and thus find alternate solutions and language to mitigate this phase. In the immediate post-conflict phase, disarmament is a vital confidence-building measure toward continuing the peace process. Over the long term, it will help consolidate peace.

Demobilization

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centers to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion.³

Demobilization is the process of turning combatants into civilians. It involves the assembly, disarmament, administration, and discharge of former combatants, and it can apply to irregular combatants, guerrilla or freedom fighters, and even regular soldiers. The latter group demobilizes because armed forces often reduce their numbers after a conflict. The process begins with identifying criteria for selection followed by the actual selection and processing of those to be demobilized. Demobilization ends with some formal acknowledgement of discharge from the military or armed group service. The demobilization process may be a short, one- to five-day process or an extended stay in

²) Note of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).
³) Note of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).
an assembly or cantonment area. It also may be preceded by a holding period or interim stabilization procedure if the parties so choose.

A demobilization programme may include many steps during which a combatant: relinquishes weapons and equipment, leaves a unit, exchanges a uniform for civilian clothes, undergoes medical screening and administrative processing, indicates their desire for future education and training, and receives information and new identification documents or discharge papers. The demobilization process may include compensation or assistance in the form of reinsertion.

Reinsertion

Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.\(^4\)

Reinsertion is the transition of ex-soldiers into the communities in which they will become civilians. The exact point where demobilization ends and reintegration begins is hard to describe. Reinsertion is an intermediate, transitional phase. Transport, reception, and personal security are some of the key issues in this phase of the process. A demobilization benefits package may include short-term reintegration assistance.

Reintegration

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.\(^5\)

In the context of DDR, reintegration refers to the process by which former combatants and their families assimilate into social, economic, and political life in civilian communities. The objective of reintegration is to permit ex-combatants and their families to become productive, self-sustaining citizens who contribute to the community. Reintegration is a complex psychological, social, political, and economic process that begins prior to demobilization and continues for an extended period following the ex-combatant’s reinsertion into civilian life. Successful reintegration helps demobilized soldiers become

\(^4\) Note of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).
\(^5\) Note of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31).
ordinary, active members of their communities, unidentifiable as a separate interest group and without special status or needs.

More broadly, reintegration refers to the process by which groups displaced by war (including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)) re-enter and transition to productive lives and participate in the community’s political, social, and economic life. Hostilities remaining between groups following a violent civil war may complicate reintegration.

- **DDR processes** are the previously mentioned disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes included in the greater peace process. In most cases, they go on for a longer period than the DDR programme mentioned below. For example, the disarmament process includes the disarmament programme for ex-combatants plus a larger SALW civilian collection programme. The same concept applies to the finite timeframe of the reintegration programme, while fully reintegrating an individual back into society can take much longer.

- **DDR programmes** are time-limited programmes intended to assist the above processes. They are grounded in the belief that demobilization and reintegration will not occur spontaneously for the majority of fighters, and that delays may derail the peace process. Many believe that the benefits of such programmes to the country, region, and international community outweigh the costs — although that is subject to debate. Longer-term social and economic reintegration programmes for former combatants are intended to help ex-combatants become part of the productive life of their civilian communities, such as through training, employment, and credit schemes. Other programmes focus on political reintegration and reconciliation.

- **Community-based Reintegration Projects** are activities designed to benefit a target area or community and its residents in general instead of targeting a particular group or groups within the community.

- **Ex-combatants (XC)** are persons who previously engaged in hostilities and may include men, women, and children who were involved in fighting and supporting combatants, in addition to uniformed soldiers. Programmes that provide benefits to ex-combatants may set conditions based on eligibility criteria. For example, in some conflicts, only ex-combatants registered by their factions may be eligible. This often excludes women, children, and other supporters (cooks, spies, munitions-bearers, porters, etc.), as well as family members who depend on
those fighters. More recent conflicts have used a broader definition of ex-combatant highlighting differential benefits for fighters and their support elements. These criteria require careful definition and should be included in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Ex-combatants normally receive a discharge certificate or identity card, which may be a requirement for access to some benefits or programmes.

Section 1.4 Objectives of DDR

As stated in the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS):

The objective of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants together make up a complex process with political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions.

This process aims to deal with the post-conflict security problem that arises when combatants are left without livelihoods and support networks during the vital period stretching from conflict to peace, recovery and development. DDR also helps build national capacity to assist in the reintegration of ex-combatants and to support communities receiving ex-combatants and working for their peaceful and sustainable reintegration.6

Section 1.5 Post-Conflict Environment

To properly understand DDR, practitioners must understand the post-conflict context and environment. A post-conflict country suffered from protracted militarized violence that likely contributed to the fragmentation of the socioeconomic, security, and political structures of the society. Different factions may control different parts of the country, and government representation and legitimacy may be limited at best. Frequently, the State lacks the ability to undertake basic government functions, and the State and civil society lack experience in forming democratic structures and processes.

Formerly opposed communities may maintain their tensions and distrust in the aftermath of civil conflicts. In light of this, the overriding goal of the peace process is to encourage formerly hostile communities to communicate and bargain with each other within the framework of agreed-upon procedures of a CPA. The CPA outlines procedures that can help channel competing interests and policy differences into peaceful forms of competition and collaboration. DDR practitioners must make these

peaceful channels more attractive as the means for achieving group and individual interests than the alternative of taking up arms. Some recent conflicts have lacked peace agreements. In those cases, the DDR process aims to provide an alternative to continued conflict and violence while working towards an eventual peace agreement.

In the transition period following a civil conflict, various actors place differing priorities on programme objectives. Actors include governments, former warring factions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations such as United Nations agencies, and donors. DDR programme objectives may be social, economic, political, military, and/or fiscal. Social and economic objectives might include equitable and sustainable development. Political objectives include democratization and stability. Military objectives may include a smaller and more affordable armed force that meets the new security needs of the country. Fiscal objectives include debt and deficit reduction and improving the balance of payments.

Each actor has a different timeline or programme phase with which they are most concerned. Some groups are primarily concerned with the immediate security objectives of a programme. These entail the immediate pacification of combatants to initiate an election and/or political transition. Peacekeeping contingents, some donors, and some incumbent leaders typically fall into this category. Other groups have a longer-term perspective and view the economic, political, and social reintegration of ex-combatants as a key to future stability. These groups view reintegration as a prerequisite for implementing the terms of the peace accords, consolidating the peace process, and preventing the conflict from recurring. This is one aspect of the issue of urgency versus development in DDR.

The organizations, communities, and individuals supporting DDR have different perceptions of the priorities, goals, and scope of the reintegration process. It is not surprising that the programme components they recommend and the resources they offer often differ and sometimes clash. Groups are likely to disagree on when reintegration programmes should begin. They may differ on the extent of
programmes and the needs of demobilized soldiers and could have different views on the end point of reintegration and indicators of success. DDR practitioners should define in advance the impacts sought by reintegration programmes in order to design programming that can fulfil those goals. How success is defined will vary according to the needs and context of the affected country. Defining success and agreeing on its indicators are important steps in coordinating the activities of those supporting the process.

The post-conflict environment also offers opportunities. One of these opportunities is to reform the political system and change features that potentially contributed to the outbreak of violent conflict in the first place. Political reintegration efforts must be sensitive to the danger of reinforcing unequal geopolitical structures and encourage greater regional political representation and economic development. Lesson 5, which focuses on reintegration, will discuss further details.

Section 1.6 Post-Conflict Security Situation

Uncertainty and challenges for national security, public security, and personal security typically characterize the post-conflict environment. These problems often include continued human rights abuses (sporadic and systematic), lack of accountability by security forces, lack of civilian control over the military, resistance to change by military factions, the existence of rogue military units, low competence of police forces to perform domestic security functions, and increased crime. In addition, the proliferation of small arms, a lack of employment opportunities, weakened social institutions, and a war-induced black market in illicit goods and services may all contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to criminality. In some countries, criminality may even replace militarized violence as the principal source of personal insecurity in the post-conflict political, legal, and social vacuum. These security shortfalls at all three levels have a strong impact on the DDR programme’s prospects for success.

Section 1.7 Security Concerns of Demobilized Combatants

Ex-combatants require material and personal security in order to successfully reintegrate. They need to see a safe, viable alternative to fighting. Their leaders must also feel sufficiently confident that
their legitimate interests will be respected. Without this confidence, there is no political will for peace. Some of the issues that affect material security include ownership of land, protection of movement and trade, available work, and benefits packages. Police or paramilitary activity, respect for human rights, protection of political rights and civil society, and free and fair electoral and judicial systems affect personal security. Personal security includes freedom from slavery, torture, inhumane treatment or punishment; and freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile.

Former combatants who give up their guns and their identity as part of an armed group often have concerns for the physical safety of themselves and their family members. They may fear that any political or territorial gains made through the conflict may be lost (or any losses made worse). The losing side will require reassurances backed by guarantees they will be protected and will not suffer reprisals after they demobilize and disarm, especially in the case of the termination of hostilities due to a military victory by one side. In the case of an internal conflict ended through a negotiated settlement, the non-government side will have the same security concerns. Former combatants from both sides may settle in the same regions. Combatants who formerly fought for the irregular army are likely to feel threatened by the government’s military and political control both at the national level and in the regions where they settle.

![Arms are destroyed by fire during the “Flame of Peace” ceremony to signify the beginning of the country’s disarmament and reconciliation process in Bouake, Côte d’Ivoire. 30 July 2007. UN Photo #149796 by Basile Zoma.](image)

### Section 1.8 What is a DDR Programme (DDRP)?

A DDR programme is a vehicle through which DDR takes place. Designing DDR programmes, obtaining funding, and preparing to implement them can be a lengthy process. Even after reintegration programmes begin, it takes time before they start to sustain ex-combatants. This suggests that DDR is most effective as a phased process extending over many months and even years. Those managing the process, however, may be concerned with security. If disarming and moving soldiers through camps or discharge centres happens quickly, they can be demobilized and dispersed faster. Doing so can make peacekeeping missions less costly and security problems more easily manageable (for the short-term). Some planners involved in early missions believed that reintegration programmes had to be ready by the time ex-combatants left the camps. This left little time to prepare sophisticated reintegration
programmes. In some cases, the different timelines and priorities of the many groups involved in planning clashed, paralyzing action, threatening donor commitments, and greatly delaying programming and implementation.

The issues of urgency versus development in DDR are not necessarily incompatible — planners can accommodate both with proper coordination. Planners should view the period immediately following demobilization as a transition or reinsertion stage that precedes reintegration. Programmes can provide immediate assistance packages (reinsertion benefits) to XC leaving camps. At the same time, DDR practitioners can inform XC about subsequent reintegration programmes. Soldiers need to know about eligibility, when the programmes will be available, and how they can access them. This will help sustain ex-combatants until reintegration programmes take effect while providing the necessary time for preparation. Knowing that additional programmes are planned may help pacify demobilized soldiers who might otherwise give up on the peace process and turn to banditry or extremism. There is also a risk, however, of frustrating expectations with delayed or abandoned programmes.

Demobilization may not always result in a reduction in defence expenditures — that is context-dependent. DDR practitioners should ask: Is there an ongoing conflict? Are there other armed groups or potential clashes with neighbouring countries? These factors affect the security sector and its future reformation (if needed). Reforming, training, and equipping the (new) police and army and paying the remaining, more professional force may offset the savings gained from reducing the number of personnel under arms. Any peace dividend should be understood in terms of the social, economic, and political effects and benefit as well as the fiscal gains of reforming the security sector. For more details, see Lesson 6.

In some respects, DDR is a political process that takes place in the aftermath of wars or protracted civil conflicts. These conflicts often weaken political institutions and disrupt political processes. Returning large numbers of XC to civilian life can further destabilize local and even national politics by increasing the number of eligible voters in an area. The ex-combatants may turn to political extremism if their expectations are not met. The manner of reintegrating ex-soldiers, their areas of resettlement, their available benefits, and the way they form associations will affect the political process for years.
after the DDRP concludes. The success or failure of DDR programmes is intertwined with the progress of political reconciliation. Because of this, strong commitment and cooperation from the leadership of armies and their political leaders are necessary for DDR programmes to succeed.

The aftermath of war complicates reintegration. National and local governments may be weak. Communities face many competing demands. Fighting may have destroyed resources and infrastructure, and people with basic knowledge and skills may have fled or been killed. Economic and social institutions are often shattered, and civil society is generally weak.

There is no single model or blueprint for DDR programmes. A DDRP is context-dependent, and while case studies and existing programmes can offer lessons and recommendations that might increase the chance of success, planners must tailor each DDR programme to the political, security, economic, fiscal, and social situation of the country. They must also reconcile the objectives of the many actors involved in supporting programmes with these realities.

**DDR as a Continuum**

The negotiation stage is critical and should consider all elements, as all peacebuilding stages are linked one to the other. This could take time. In fact, ensuring proper consideration and planning of all aspects of a Peace Accord may require months or years of negotiation. The development of forward and backward linkages between each stage, therefore, strengthens the peacebuilding process and ensures a smoother transition to a sustainable peace.

Demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration are not distinct phases, but rather a continuum of transition from military to productive civilian life. Most often, programmes implement them by considering time and space to accommodate the size of the groups, as a single massive demobilization effort could destabilize the country. During each of these processes, the ex-combatants have different needs and require different support measures. Experience demonstrates that DDR practitioners should think of it as a single, continuous process. Planners must connect and coordinate all sets of activities to increase the chance of a successful outcome. Not everything will happen at once. DDR operations have too often begun as fragmented, uncoordinated efforts with good intentions, and perhaps even short-term successes, before ultimately ending in failure.

This is not to say that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration must be done sequentially. There may be times — especially in armed societies — where disarming the combatants may, in fact, put them in harm’s way. In these circumstances, allowing some of the combatants to remain armed while demobilizing and reintegrating has been beneficial in achieving the peace. In other peace processes, the factions viewed the concept of disarmament the same as surrendering and could accept it. Those situations
required a new language of putting weapons beyond use in order for disarmament to proceed. The fact remains that over time, disarmament must occur, be it through a DDR programme or a subsequent SALW programme. The same is true for demobilization, which can be done in a mobile or in situ manner. In a mobile demobilization process, the programme goes to the people. In the in situ manner, the XCs go to an assembly area, concentration area, or holding area for processing. In other circumstances, combatants may already be in their chosen communities, and DDR (especially reintegration) can take place there along with the other returning refugees, IDPs, and stayees. This all depends on the context of the conflict.

Reintegration needs both urgency and development components to be effective. The urgency component calls for short-term support to XC — both directly as individuals and indirectly as groups resettled in specific areas. Policies for this component must be hands-on, targeted, and interventionist. The development component calls for medium- to long-term government interventions only indirectly targeted at XC and harmonized with longer term national development initiatives focused on the needs of all members of society, including refugees, IDPs, and stayees, to help rebuild or reform a community. Community reintegration, sometimes referred to as area reintegration, may be more effective in the long-term, but it often faces a funding dilemma with donors who have funds for specific purposes that cannot always be mixed or used for other purposes.

**Forward Linkage**

Demobilization must link to reintegration. If reintegration options already exist at the demobilization stage, DDR practitioners can use them as incentives tied to reinsertion programmes to convince individual combatants to give up their old lives. However, this linkage has not been fully developed in many recent cases, meaning they depend on reinsertion programmes to help cover the gap.

Generally, past reintegration programmes have had little in common with development policies despite the fact that reintegration should eventually convert to development efforts. Reintegration strategies occurring in the immediate post-conflict environment must take into account many constraints foreign to development and achieve objectives of little developmental value. However, interdependence is needed to ensure the stability of the process. Reintegration programmes will remain unstable unless
they the subsequent development stage strengthens them. Planners usually develop autonomous reintegration programmes and wait to incorporate development features later on. The best option, however, is to start integrating the most fundamental aspects of development policies into DDRPs from the beginning. This forward linkage helps avoid the urgency trap and aids a smooth transition to development.

**DDR Programme Funding**

Assisting the demobilization and reintegration processes requires a well-structured, well-planned, and integrated programme. DDR programmes tend to be costly, especially for a government in a war-torn country beset with many competing demands. Few countries can afford the complete costs of a DDRP, and DDR planners often face the challenge of devising programmes without knowing what resources will be available. International donor aid and other assistance are essential to formulate such a plan. Many donors are reluctant to commit resources until presented with such a plan. Worse, they may wait until demobilization is actually underway to accept that there is sufficient political will to invest in peace. Many countries like Angola and Liberia saw several peace processes and DDRPs come and go. Political will, careful planning, and inclusion into the peace accord process can help improve the deployment of the DDRP as soon as there is a ceasefire and thus help prevent the parties from slipping back to violence. In their absence, idle soldiers may turn to banditry, officers may interfere with the political process, and resources needed for reconstruction continue to be tied up in continued conflict. Demobilization benefits and reintegration programmes may be necessary to help persuade combatants — especially military leadership — that complying with peace arrangements is in their interest. However, donors often have difficulty responding quickly to the need for funds. There are both bureaucratic and political impediments. Donor governments must follow budget cycles, and pledges
of aid take time to convert to available cash. Donors may be cautious about committing funds to an uncertain peace process, although the lack of funds may make the peace even more tenuous. For all these reasons, funded programme segments sometimes lack coordination with each other, and vital components may be neglected. Lack of donor support may make it impossible for governments to keep promises (i.e. providing land to ex-combatants in Nicaragua and El Salvador). Failure to keep these promises may lay the foundation for future violence.

**Institutional Arrangements for DDR Programmes**

In some cases, an ad hoc government-established national institution led the demobilization process and worked with the assistance of international institutions. Since the early 1990s, DDR experts recommend having a central coordinating body, such as a National Commission for DDR (NCDDR), to help plan, implement, monitor, and follow-up on DDRPs.

Coordination within government and between government and other relevant actors is important in maximizing the effectiveness of programme interventions. The establishment of one civilian agency with overall design and implementation responsibility serves this purpose best. Central coordination balanced by decentralized implementation authority to the districts constitutes an effective institutional structure.7

The managing organization must combine centralized control and decentralized implementation. Field offices provide beneficiaries with easier access to staff and programme benefits and contribute to making the programme more responsive to local needs.

**Section 1.9 Security Threat Posed by Ex-Combatants (XC)**

Ex-combatants often have expectations of upward social and economic mobility following the peace settlement. Such expectations are likely to go unmet for the majority. They may have received promises of compensation for sacrifices or foregone opportunities during their time in armed service. Neglecting demobilized soldiers has consequences for both the soldiers and the society to which they belong. Unmet needs can result in social unrest in communities and political instability at the national level.

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General Samuel Bower, former force commander of ex-rebels, with UNMIL’s peace message and Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s photo in hand while at an UNMIL disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) sensitization event. 20 November 2003. UN Photo #29551 by Shima Roy.
level. High unemployment, crime, and resentment can impede reconstruction and development efforts. Reconciliation of former adversaries is more difficult under such circumstances. If their needs are not met, ex-combatants can pose a special risk due to their experience with organized violence.

XC have been schooled in and practiced violence for a living. Membership in an armed force — whether regular or irregular — can provide individuals with a livelihood, social status, identity, support network, and security. After demobilizing, ex-combatants lose the things that membership in the force represented to them. They also have experience in participating in a cooperative organizational structure to carry out violent activities. Easy access to weapons is the norm in countries recently engaged in a civil conflict. If they are unable to meet their basic needs, they may engage in criminal or political violence. They may re-arm themselves in small groups to participate in actions such as roadblocks or kidnapping to reinforce their demands. They may become involved in armed disputes with their former rivals or get involved with other armed groups or organized crime, destabilizing the peace process.

Section 1.10 Impact of Past Programmes

DDR does not take place in a vacuum, and the success of any programme to support DDR is closely linked to the political, economic, and security situation of the country where it occurred. In some countries, there have been multiple iterations of DDR programmes due to earlier failed processes. The immediate effect is that people see the benefits ex-combatants have received previously and may join one faction or another in order to receive some form of benefit in the post-war setting. Expectation management is key in these situations, especially during the negotiation process when the definition and eligibility criteria of a combatant are finalized to help retain control of budgets and expenses for the DDR programme.

Section 1.11 Conclusion

The transition from civil war to sustainable peace is a difficult one. Successful DDR of XC is one of the essential steps or enablers of this transition. DDR practitioners must view it as a holistic process, not discreet steps. Most countries in need of DDR require outside assistance and funding to support programmes. Similarly, early planning and detailed negotiations — including donor involvement and effective coordination — can prevent many problems, but planners need to be aware of impediments to the DDR process. Recent mandates expanded the role of DDR, using it to enhance security, support development, help reduce government expenditures, and remove obstacles to democracy. In some
cases, previously voluntary DDR processes became involuntary, and participants were detained while undergoing the process. Where possible, planners should specify DDR objectives early and preferably include them as part of the overall peace negotiations so that all parties subscribe to them. A case can be made for targeting ex-soldiers as a specific needs group, but it is usually better to consider the needs of the community as a whole when designing suitable inclusive or holistic programmes. The way in which DDR programmes are implemented has far-reaching implications for security, society, politics, and the economy in a post-conflict society.

**Suggested readings:**


- UN Integrated DDR Standards (UNDDR) <www.unddr.org>.
End-of-Lesson Quiz  »

1. The UN Secretary-General defines reintegration as _____.
   A. the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income
   B. the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization
   C. the assistance offered by local institutions and populations following disbanding of illegal combatants
   D. a life-long process of transitional assistance supported by international donors

2. The UN Secretary-General defines disarmament as _____.
   A. surrendering of all troops before they become prisoners of war
   B. retrocession of all arms and weapons to the ICRC at the end of a conflict
   C. collection, documentation, control, and disposal of ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population
   D. collection of heavy weapons as a first step towards a comprehensive ceasefire

3. Complete this sentence by choosing the correct pair of words: The objective of the DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in ________ environments so that recovery and development can begin. The ________, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants together make up a complex process with political, military, security, humanitarian, and socioeconomic dimensions.
   A. conflict, reinsertion
   B. conflict, disarmament
   C. post-conflict, reinsertion
   D. post-conflict, disarmament

4. All UN DDR programmes should be _____.
   A. internationally owned and self-centred
   B. inflexible and accountable to the ex-combatants
   C. separated from other peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and secretive
   D. integrated and flexible

5. Which of the following is NOT considered a combatant?
   A. A person arriving in a host country as a refugee
   B. A person involved in recruiting or training military personnel
   C. A member of a national army or an irregular military
   D. A person arriving in a host country carrying arms or in military uniform

6. Which example best defines reintegration?
   A. Ensuring that ex-combatants have housing and jobs for the long term
   B. Encouraging former combatants to cease perceiving themselves as a special class, and to become accepted and identified as members of the community
   C. A life-long process of transitional assistance supported by international donors
   D. Short-term assistance provided to ex-combatants after the demobilization process

Answer Key provided on the next page.
End-of-Lesson Quiz »

7. The UN Secretary-General defines reinsertion as ______.
   A. the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization and prior to reintegration
   B. the assistance offered to ex-combatants following the reintegration process
   C. the assistance offered by local institutions and populations following disbanding of illegal combatants
   D. a life-long process of transitional assistance supported by international donors

10. Which of the following are common difficulties which may confront demobilized soldiers as they finish a DDRP?
   A. Lack of civic awareness and self-reliance
   B. Lack of financial resources and inadequate shelter
   C. Lack of education and marketable skills
   D. All of the above

8. Which of the following is not a situation in which DDR could be used?
   A. Disbanding of armed groups and militias
   B. Protection of cultural sites in a conflict environment
   C. Downsizing of armies or armed forces
   D. Disbanding of gangs and other armed groups

9. DDR should be ______.
   A. a holistic process
   B. a series of discreet steps to achieve a goal
   C. one of the essential steps or enablers from civil war to sustainable peace
   D. Both A and C

Answer Key »

1. A
2. C
3. D
4. D
5. A
6. B
7. A
8. B
9. D
10. D