
DO DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS SUFFICE IN ‘RULE OF FORCE’ ENVIRONMENTS: HOW TO FILL THE SECURITY VOID?*

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Conflicto; Programas de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración; posconflicto; construcción de paz.

RESUMEN

Los programas de Desarme, Desmovilización y Reintegración (DDR) de los ex combatientes casi siempre se llevan a cabo en entornos complejos de (post)conflicto político y seguridad. La eficacia y sostenibilidad de los programas de DDR depende en gran medida de tales factores contextuales pero no suelen ser capaces de abordar todos ellos. Este artículo pretende llamar la atención sobre la necesidad de un enfoque más integral en los programas de DDR, fortaleciendo el vínculo con otras iniciativas de construcción de paz.

* Both authors have written this article in their personal capacity. The views expressed are thus of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their associated organization.

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con el objetivo de fortalecer el Estado de Derecho, como el control de fronteras y programas de políticas comunitarias.

ABSTRACT

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs of ex-combatants are almost always carried out in complex (post) conflict political and security environments. The effectiveness and sustainability of DDR programs largely depend on such contextual factors, but are neither aimed nor capable of addressing them all. This paper aims at bringing attention to the need for a more holistic approach to DDR programs by strengthening the link with other peacebuilding initiatives with the objective to improve the Rule of Law, such as border control and community policing programs.

RÉSUMÉ

Les programmes de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (DDR) des ex-combattants sont presque toujours effectuées dans des environnements complexes de (post-) conflit politique et de sécurité. L'efficacité et la durabilité des programmes de DDR dépend fortement de ces facteurs contextuels, mais ils ne sont pas capables d'aborder à tous. Cet article vise d'attirer l'attention sur la nécessité d'une approche plus globale aux programmes de DDR, en renforçant le lien avec d'autres initiatives de paix avec l'objectif d'améliorer l'état de droit, telles que le contrôle des frontières et de programmes de politiques communautaires.

Introduction

The sustainable Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants is mostly implemented in post-conflict environments and is therefore often a critical component of post-conflict recovery. The objective of DDR is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can be initiated. The DDR of ex-combatants is a complex process with political, military, security, humanitarian, psycho-social and socio-economic dimensions. The objective of DDR programs is, among others, to tackle a security challenge created by ex-combatants brought back to civilian life and to ensure them an alternative livelihood or network

beyond their line of command or former comrades during the critical transition period from conflict to peace and development. The hardest part of the DDR programs is indisputably the reintegration process. First of all, there are difficulties related to the fact that most ex-combatants do not know the alternative to a life in the military. Second, in a number of instances, communities have strong reasons to be wary and reluctant in hosting them back.

The demand for DDR programs for ex-combatants in post-conflict settings has increased over the years, particularly in non-peacekeeping contexts where the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank have often played a leadership role. After decades of competition, trial and error with the implementation of DDR programs in various regional areas, including a particular initial impression of failure in Liberia, the UN has eventually teamed up to develop an integrated approach to DDR. Subsequently, the UN approach has developed considerably over the last few years with the advent of the UN DDR Interagency Working Group (IAWG) and the development of Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) launched in 2006.¹ The unique character of the IDDRS is that it brings together the field experience of over 50 experts from all regional areas in the world as well as all the UN agencies that ever played a role in DDR. The IDDRS have as such consolidated the lessons learned experienced by the UN and contributed significantly to the documentation of best practices as well as the need to acknowledge the linkages between DDR programs to other practice areas, including Security Sector Reform (SSR), Transitional Justice, HIV/AIDS and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

Turning this into action at the operational level, however, remains extremely difficult. Not yet fully addressed in the IDDRS, but increasingly recognized, is the need to establish the link between DDR and Rule of Law (RoL) initiatives. In (post-) conflict states law enforcement and border control agencies as well as national security forces often lack the resources and capacity to provide the required security to their citizens. The absence of human security strengthens the community's perception that they have to provide for their own security and hence hold on to their weapons. This is particularly true for *locally* based rebel, guerilla and armed groups.

This paper aims to highlight this need for a more holistic approach to DDR by focusing on the importance to link DDR programs to broader RoL initiatives such as border control and community security programs. This has so far

1. For a detailed overview of all aspects of DDR, please visit the UN DDR resource centre <http://www.unddr.org/>.

remained relatively under-addressed in current policy and practice. DDR programs are aimed at increasing human security, but cannot achieve that on their own in the absence of governance and overall security. First, the paper provides an overview of the design and common challenges of DDR programs. Secondly, it briefly addresses how the goal and thus scope of DDR programs has shifted over the years towards a more holistic approach. Thirdly, the paper aims to illustrate why the absence of RoL is currently one of the most critical challenges to DDR programs.

A classical DDR program?

One of a kind?

There is no 'classic' text book on DDR program or process, as many practitioners or governments have illustrated by claiming that their DDR program is 'different' from all others they have been engaged in. It is highlighted also throughout the IDDRS that any DDR process is unique and will need to be adapted to the specific context (i.e. nature of the conflict and peace process, type of peace agreement, political, regional and economic context, number and nature of armed groups, UN mandate, etc.). The majority of DDR processes stems from and is embedded in a peace agreement: i.e. Burundi (2000, Arusha), DRC (2003, Lusaka), Angola, Guatemala, Mozambique (1991, Nampula), Cambodia, Kosovo, Central African Republic (CAR) (2007), Sudan (2005), Liberia (2003), Sierra Leone (1999) and Aceh (2002). In other places, DDR processes are based on government incentives to reduce their national armed forces (i.e. Guinea Bissau, East Timor) or efforts to take control of part of their territory occupied by paramilitary or other armed groups (i.e. Colombia, Republic of Congo, Somalia, Uganda).

Furthermore, the level of involvement of the international community depends on the nature of the peace process (i.e. if the government is a party in the conflict there is a need for an honest broker) as well as on the level of capacity and the resources of national governments. DDR programs are more often than not, carried out in countries characterized by weak state institutions, i.e. the required infrastructure for the range of DDR activities are weak and poorly institutionalized, including with respect their capacity to deliver essential public services which is likely to have been severely reduced during conflict. Examples of such situations are Guinea Bissau, DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Southern Sudan, CAR and Uganda etc. In other cases, there are rather strong state structures in place ready to take the DDR process forward, such as Colombia, Angola or Nepal.

What does a DDR process entail and why is it so challenging to implement?

During the disarmament phase, former combatants must hand in their weapons to designated authorities responsible for the registration, safe storage or sometimes redistribution or destruction of these weapons. In many war-affected countries, the circulation and possession of small arms is widespread among the civilian population or informal militia groups. The possession of a weapon often has a symbolic value, representing status, security and confidence, for which an adequate substitute must be found. An effective disarmament strategy must therefore be more comprehensive than the mere recollection, storage and destruction. Eventually, there must be all encompassing confidence building measures put in place so that people feel safe enough to give up what they perceived as their means of protection and have alternative sources of status.

As an example, the challenges for the DDR processes in Sudan and Central African Republic (CAR) are illustrative of the fact that a general feeling of safety is required for combatants and civilians to hand over their weapons. The upcoming referendum in 2011, sustains the wide spread perception of insecurity and the risk of a new civil war in Southern Sudan. In a similar vein, the weak border control in the Northern areas of CAR where most rebel groups are, has ended up in high levels of cattle raiding, highly volatile road blockages and plundering by Sudanese and Chadian armed groups. Communities have taken security measures into their own hands (or depend on other armed groups for protection) in the absence of government forces or police. In such 'rule by force' rather than 'rule of law' environments, DDR programs are clearly not the *only* answer to the security problem.

Demobilization consists on legally ending combatants' military status and turning them into civilians and citizens, including handing in uniforms and other military belongings. It often provides a crucial momentum in the process in terms of collecting information about the ex-combatants and their returning communities, essential in preparation of the reintegration process. During both the disarmament and demobilization phases, practitioners are often faced with significant logistical challenges, in particular the difficulty in having access to the ex-combatants. Regions like Eastern Congo, Southern Sudan and Northern CAR are very remote and lack almost any form of infrastructure and communications. Similarly, in Sri Lanka and Colombia, where armed groups are located in remote parts of the jungle, DDR officers face significant logistical constraints.

The transition phase between demobilization and reintegration is considered to be the most problematic of the DDR process. Through history, a number of

failures of DD programs have emerged from the incapacity to provide timely and sufficient reintegration support to demobilized combatants, generating frustration and newly created insecurity. Not only the political, social, economic and legal structures still have to be rebuilt in order to provide a sustainable enabling environment for reintegration, but ex-combatants may also have unrealistic expectations about life after discharge, sometimes based on incorrect information received through public information campaigns during the disarmament process. In Sudan, for instance, because communities were not well informed about DDR program objectives and eligibility criteria, many people believed that DDR was a wider recovery initiative in which all were entitled to participate. In DRC, riots emerged in demobilization camps due to misunderstandings on the content and the value of the reintegration kits delivered to ex-combatants as they were leaving the premises. In order to smoothen the transition, referred to as reinsertion, ex-combatants are usually provided with a first assistance package to cover their immediate needs and with transportation from the assembly areas (demobilization camps or the barracks) to the area of reintegration.

Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants (and their dependants) enter into civilian life, return to their communities and acquire sustainable employment and incomes. Apart from their new livelihood, it is also important that ex-combatants have the opportunity to develop a new sense of identity. In some countries, for instance, the salaries provided by the army were relatively high compared to the limited benefits of other jobs, as it was the case in Burundi. A large group of former army recruits (i.e. ex-FAB) had developed a strong dependency mindset as they had been institutionalized in the army, which used to provide all services they needed. The shattered economy and the gloomy prospect of getting a job outside the army after the DDR process made many combatants quite reluctant to leave. In other cases, the challenge is related to the high benefits armed groups, paramilitaries or factions of the army, can offer to their combatants through drug trade or criminal activities (i.e. Guinea Bissau, Afghanistan and Colombia), benefits that no DDR program could ever compensate with.

Failure to complete demobilization and sustainable reintegration can jeopardize durable peace as ex-combatants tend to resort to violence as a familiar way of making a living. In Bujumbura and other provincial cities of Burundi (similar to many other countries like Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Guatemala, El Salvador, for instance) slums are overflowing with unemployed former combatants and young men, drawn to urban areas to look for employment. Tensions increased between the various groups that make up this 'slum population': former fighters who self-demobilized or fought in the war as part of a street

gang are resentful at ex-combatants being ‘officially’ reintegrated, who receive acknowledgement, money and in-kind material support from the DDR program. In Bujumbura, there is a high concentration of youth particularly in urban communes, where they live in close proximity with the *quartiers*, often a site of political activity divided among ethnic and factional lines. Youth in urban areas represent a slow burning fire that threatens to erupt in potentially uncontrollable violent outbreaks, particularly with the upcoming elections scheduled for July 2010 as youth groups are being politically (re)mobilized. There have been violent youth outbreaks in urban areas of Bujumbura in December 2009 and January 2010 and more are expected closer to the elections. The link to DDR is quite clear.

In Sri Lanka, as the armed conflict was ravaging the North and East, the rise in crime and violence imposed an additional threat to the country’s social fabric. Particularly worrying were the crimes carried out by the so-called ‘gangs’. This highlighted the urgency of integrating ex-servicemen into civil society, as police reports confirmed that persons with military backgrounds were among those criminals. Although figures were not reliable given the ongoing conflict, from 1998 to 2003 an estimated 1500 soldiers a year left the army after 12 to 22 years or services and about 20.000 as ‘deserters’.² Most of these young men were found to have serious problems in finding jobs.

Towards a more holistic approach to DDR

Before the 1980s, disarmament and demobilization schemes and police reform activities were primarily carried out by and for the military and police and were primarily motivated by incentives of Cold War cooperation. DDR programs were often targeting ex-combatants (and in some cases liberation or guerrilla movements) and mostly undertaken to right-size armed forces. As multi- and bilateral involvement in peace support missions increased during the 1990s, the first UN DDR operation was initiated in Southern Africa in the late 1980s, with missions soon following in Central America and the Balkans. Civilian police components attached to UN peace support operations emerged in the 1990s and began to expand, with growing emphasis on RoL and judicial reform.

Over the next decade, traditional security promotion was introduced in a wide array of post-war contexts and advocated for an expanding range of goals. In the case of DDR, these ranged from efforts prevent conflict, reducing military expenditures and creating the state’s monopoly over the legitimate means of

2. SPECHT, I., “Jobs for Rebels and Soldiers”, in: *Jobs After War: a critical challenge in the peace and reconstruction puzzle*, ILO 2003, pp. 97-98.

force, to neutralizing spoilers, breaking command and control of previous armed factions, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Over the last years, the approach to DDR programs has become more holistic, moving away from the targeted approach and primarily focusing the military components and ex-combatant as such. DDR has become an integrated process. It is crucial to understand that all three elements of DDR are interrelated and interdependent and that links to other peacebuilding practice areas are essential.

Filling the security void: the need to link DDR programs to Rule of Law initiatives

'Rule by force' vs 'rule of law'

From a conflict prevention and recovery perspective, a "rule of law" situation is one opposed to contexts "ruled by force". Without physical security or justice and well functioning rule of law institutions, no peace will sustain to enable development. During armed conflict, emergency laws often supersede constitutional rights and civilian courts by *ad hoc* military courts. Armed groups tend to be the principal agents of "law and order", often at the cost of basic human rights and security as well as gender and child protection. Military expenditures dominate national resources and budget allocations, while limited means, if any, are allocated to basic social services and opportunities for economic development. Police, courts and prisons often lack the capacity and incentives, or simply the operational tools, to guarantee and protect human rights and security.

Small arms are usually the only means of protection at hand for communities, in the absence of state protection under the law. Frustrated youth and men may resort to weapons in order to shift power balances. Power struggles tend to further violate women's rights, including sexual and gender based violence. Moreover, post-conflict societies often lack the institutional capacity to immediately resume or establish effective and accountable justice and security systems. Lawyers, judges, prosecutors, policemen, prison officers, legislators and civil servants operate in dysfunctional systems, with limited resource for salaries, tools and positive incentives.

A critical factor in contexts where there is a no RoL is therefore the absence of a functioning security sector, characterized by a lack of accountability, increased corruption, lack of coordination and inter-agency rivalries. Experience in many such environments indicates that the disarmament of armed rebel or politico

military groups could lead to a security vacuum, leaving communities unprotected. The vacuum is often filled by a high rise warring factions and organized criminal groups, resulting in greater insecurity, which could lead to an increase in the demand for and use of weapons by the community.

Mixed motivations for taking part in a conflict

DDR programs are more often than not implemented in contexts characterized by the absence of RoL, including lawlessness and a lack of overall security. First, a context without RoL enforcement provides space for criminal behavior, often encouraged by a lack of 'peaceful' sustainable economic opportunities. The absence of RoL allows easy access to natural resources (diamonds, etc.) and drugs (poppy, coca plantations, etc.). There is a significant number of countries where the conflicts are not, or no longer, fought for primarily political or ideological reasons. Rather, they are increasingly based on benefits to be gained from criminal activities, including drug trafficking or other forms of (il)licit trade in natural resources.

The following cases aim to illustrate this apparent shift in motivations for groups to engage in violence. Nepal is a good example of a rather traditional type of conflict, where Maoists were primarily fighting government forces for political and ideological reasons. In Colombia on the other hand, illicit resources and drugs play a critical role in the funding and continuation of civil war. Conflict-sensitive approaches are required to ensure that the security of beneficiaries and participants be a top priority in development and not to be sacrificed for broader, national or geostrategic interests. In Guinea Bissau, the upcoming demobilization and reintegration process will be particularly difficult given the lack of alternative opportunities for demobilized soldiers to make a living. The country is undergoing its fourth attempt at DDR and increasing drug traffic is likely to pose a significant challenge to the SSR/ DDR process.

The motivations for armed groups to take part in violent outbreaks, as well as their motivation to return to it, can also be closely related to the existence of war economies, which may persist during peacetime. Chronic predation and rent seeking in wartime can give rise to continued militia activity or illegal extraction (as in the DRC) or the penetration of state bodies and parts of national territory by organized crime.

Second, the lack of efficient border control in one country or region may improve the capacities of criminal warring factions and increase their opportunities, as currently experienced in the Northern regions of the CAR where cattle raiding, road blockages and plundering by rebel groups from Sudan and

Chad are common. In the absence of well functioning government security forces, many communities in Northern CAR depend on armed groups from the area for their daily protection, raising the question who will protect those communities when we take away the weapons of those who protect them? DDR officers are currently faced with the question how to provide security in the Northern areas of the country while complying with the exigencies of the demobilization of rebel groups in time of the elections and this in the absence of effective security and defense forces. A 'traditional' DDR approach targeting the armed groups will not suffice in this context, as the problems originate elsewhere. What is needed is an area-based approach, tackling issues including community policing, community security and border control. The absence of border control also allows an easy circulation of combatants and weapons generating regional insecurity. The Mano river region is one of the examples as well as Central Africa (i.e. Ituri region) of recurring instability related to the free movement of weapons and combatants.

Thirdly, failing to address the link between RoL and DDR may have significant effects for ex-combatants after they have completed a DDR process. This is particularly the case where reintegration efforts have been less successful or sustainable, allowing ex-combatants to become involved in criminal activities where profitable alternatives to more peaceful livelihood opportunities are absent. An interesting example to raise here is Mozambique, which is overall considered as a success story. It started right after the war where the failure of reintegration very fast turned into a situation where the ex-rebels became famously known as the *bandidos armadas*. In similar vein, in Guatemala and El Salvador ex-combatants were mostly taken care of, but where less attention was paid to the needs of the communities, which has among others allowed the potential growth of gangs.

Overall, it seems critical in this context to note that communities and armed groups are becoming increasingly dependent on each other as matter of survival. If government forces cannot guarantee security, basic human security is often provided by communities themselves. Armed groups may depend on communities in terms of funding stemming from criminal activities or trade in illicit resources. Poppy farms (Afghanistan), diamonds (CAR, DRC, Sierra Leone) as well as coca (Colombia) are largely run by community farms. As a result, with the signing of a peace agreement, there may still be the strong criminal motivations left discouraging to hand over a weapon. At the same time, criminal or armed groups' activities benefit from community protection and *vice versa* (i.e. the Other Armed Groups in Sudan, the Mai-Mai in DRC etc.). As mentioned earlier, the rebel groups in the Northern CAR are often the only form of security for the civilian population.

The absence of RoL thus allows for an environment where persisting war and criminal economies make alternative development projects as part of reintegration progress difficult to sustain and pose serious security risks for those involved. A significant challenge for DDR programs is therefore to motivate ex-combatants to enroll in the programs when criminal motivations to take part in the conflict prevails or where the absence of basic human security requires people to hold on to their weapons. The main question in this regard is *how* DDR programs should adapt to such changes?

Conclusion

The IDDRS have contributed significantly to the documentation of best practices as well as the recognition to link DDR programs to other practice areas, including SSR and SALW in order to deal with contextual challenges affecting DDR programs. In a similar vein, yet less recognized, is the imminent need to create a much closer link between RoL programs and identify concrete possibilities of doing so in practice.

The link between DDR and RoL at the technical level should clearly be identified and strengthened wherever possible. The lack of capable border control in one country or region improves the capabilities of criminal warring factions and fuels their activities, as we have seen amongst others in the Northern regions of CAR. Any DDR program will have a hard time *encouraging* ex-combatants or communities to give up their weapons as long as criminal activities like plundering, cattle raiding and illicit trading in natural resources continue to flourish in the absence of a legal framework or law enforcement. First, no DDR program will be able to compete in terms of the benefits it can provide. Second, DDR is ultimately about increasing human security by taking away weapons from society. DDR practitioners need to be aware of the fact that in the absence of neutral and effective national security and police forces, disarmament runs the risk of creating a security void, where communities will not be able to defend themselves.

Therefore, current DDR approaches do not seem to suffice in contexts where the national government fails to provide basic human security to the civilian population. This is particularly so in cases where we have seen increased levels of interdependence between armed groups and communities, pointing at a need to move away from the currently strong divide between the military and civilian disarmament. DDR processes in contexts where there is a close interdependence between the communities and the armed/ rebel groups could, for instance, be supported by community-based policing initiatives (CBP). CBP involves the

police participating in the community and responding to the needs of that community participating in its own policing. The community may thereby participate in mobilizing resources to solve problems affecting public safety over the longer term rather than the police alone, reacting short term to incidents as they occur.

In addition to that, DDR practitioners should, among others, consider to:

- obtain information on community perceptions of security and the security architecture before to be taken into account during the planning of DDR programs;
- include RoL components into their analyses of DDR requirements within a country, including initiatives to strengthen border control;
- consider the functional areas of RoL when examining intervention options for DDR and coordinate DDR interventions with RoL and SSR interventions.