

**Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in peace operations**

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**Introduction**

I would like to express my appreciation to the organisers of this conference for providing the UN and NGO community with this important opportunity to meet together. In my experience as head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, rarely does a day go by that I am not reminded that to succeed in building peace, one must first build partnerships. The challenges inherent in achieving and consolidating peace are simply too complex for any one organisation or nation to develop the necessary skills and resources alone, and local and international NGOs play a vital part in these efforts. And so I am very pleased to today to exchange views on how the UN and NGOs might build and improve our ability to help nations leave war behind and find lasting peace.

Partnerships and close collaboration are certainly fundamental to DPKOs work in the field of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), which I will be discussing today.

**The nature of DDR**

If you asked a layperson what was involved in disarming, demobilising and reintegrating fighters, the response might be that DDR is fundamentally a military exercise - receiving weapons and dismantling military units - followed by a humanitarian one - helping fighters return to civilian life. At first blush, a reasonable answer. Certainly, DDR

involves the coordination of a complex mix of military, humanitarian and other specialisations, which I will discuss in a moment. However, our experience on the ground has shown that DDR is first and foremost a political exercise. To shut down one's war machine is to close an option for reaching one's political goals. When we engage in a DDR process, we must deal with the fact that fighting factions will probably be loath to close down their political options. Are they sending their best troops to disarm, or holding them in reserve in case the political process goes against them? Are their best weapons buried for another day, while rusted guns are turned in to be counted? What are the local, ethnic or tribal balances of power that may be upset if one group of fighters disarms before another? These are the sorts of questions which in many cases, determine the success or failure of a DDR process. The parties' willingness to engage in DDR often signals their willingness to convert from a military to a civilian form of politics, and so DDR can set the parameters for the rest of a peace process.

## **DDR**

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants is one of the links necessary to make the transition from conflict to sustainable peace. I would like to focus my comments today on key lessons which DPKO has learned in this area. The Department of Peacekeeping operations has been involved in particularly complex DDR operations over the last 10 years such as in Cambodia, Mozambique, Liberia, Angola. Currently MONUC, the operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, have major DDR mandates. While each operation has been unique in many ways, there are a number of key lessons that can be drawn from our experience with disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration exercises.

### **Political will of the parties**

When it is called for as part of a peace process, DDR is almost always one of the most sensitive and difficult aspects to achieve. This is because, fundamentally, DDR cannot progress without the political will and mutual trust of the parties to the conflict - both commodities that are in short supply during the early phases of a peace process. The parties must gain the confidence that the peace process will hold and, furthermore, that pursuing peace will serve their interests more than a return to war. DDR can build confidence itself, but it first requires confidence.

In conflicts with an international dimension, such as that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation is complicated by the fact that the domestic combatants will not begin DDR until the regional actors, and benefactors, also commit to the peace process and withdraw their forces. As it happens, the recent agreements signed between the governments of the DRC and Rwanda and Uganda respectively, now offer some hope for progress on the voluntary DDR process in-country, but the key will be to consolidate the political will expressed in the international agreements, with that of the domestic political actors. The case of the DRC also highlights the fact that information on the numbers of combatants and their location is often available only from the parties. This information is fundamental to any voluntary DDR process, and cannot easily be obtained without sufficient political will and mutual commitment from all parties to the conflict.

### **DDR as a continuum**

A second key lesson is that successful DDR processes form a natural continuum: where disarmament finishes, demobilisation begins, to be followed by reintegration. Each stage

requires the participation of local actors and international assistance in a well-sequenced, coordinated effort covering a broad spectrum of activity. Political support for the process must come from the UN, key member states and local leaders, including pressure on the parties when necessary. Humanitarian assistance for combatants and their families must be available at cantonment sites, where security must also be ensured. Military expertise is required for the technical aspects of disarmament and verification. The ex-combatants must have economic and social assistance to return to civilian life, and their host communities may also need assistance. From the fighters perspective, there is no logic in disarming unless he or she knows there is a future without the need to keep a weapon. Complicating matters further is the fact that the financial support for the various elements in the DDR sequence may come from differing sources, resulting in gaps: the UN assessed contributions may be available for cantonment and security aspects included in the budget of a peace operation, whereas humanitarian and development assistance rely voluntary sources. The complexity I describe requires a clear, coordinated plan to be agreed upon by all concerned.

### **Early planning for DDR**

Indeed, each step of the DDR process should ideally be planned out at the very outset, and built into peace agreements. A clear political road map helps to build confidence among the parties. A comprehensive plan worked out in advance can also help to clearly assign responsibilities, both among the parties and the international community. DDR requires integrated and coordinated planning between the parties, the government, peacekeepers, humanitarian agencies, international organisations and NGO's. The roles

of each should be defined in a complementary manner. This means that, not only should planning be integrated, but mechanisms for coordination set up as soon as possible.

An integrated plan for DDR also helps link the process into the wider national recovery effort. For example, disarmament and demobilization are often preconditions for reforming the national military and police. This reform may, in turn, be fundamental to the wider democratisation process. Similarly, reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life will have to be linked with justice and reconciliation efforts. Thus, the stages of a DDR process build upon each other and the wider peace effort, and every effort should be made to avoid interrupting DDR for lack of a clear plan or gaps in funding, lest it destabilise the peace process as a whole.

### **Management authority over DDR**

Successful DDR requires a strong, dedicated management structure to implement and supervise the process. A principal authority over the process, such as a joint commission, must be dedicated to the task, with subsidiary structures to implement the various technical aspects such as verification, reintegration, etc. When local capacity is limited, this may often need direct support from the international community, the UN agencies and NGO's in each part of the process. In some past cases, peacekeeping operations have assumed overall authority for DDR, but wherever politically possible, the emphasis should be on ensuring local ownership and building a national institution. If DDR is led by a national authority, this can also promote local capacity-building, and allow for the national mechanisms to continue beyond the end of the peacekeeping mandate if necessary.

### **Public information and confidence building**

Those managing the process must also foster and maintain confidence in the DDR process with all the parties. Providing public information is vital, as is international support and pressure. The parties must be confident that the process will be credible, fair and transparent, that weapons will be properly disposed of, and verification of the process by UN military observers works to that end. Fighters also need to be convinced, through credible information sources, that they will be secure throughout and that, at the end of the process, they will be able to make a living without the gun. It is essential that ex-combatants are aware of their rights and obligations in the DDR process. Armed groups and individuals outside the DDR process must also be made aware of the demands upon them, and of Security Council resolutions that impact on them. Civil society should be informed and involved in the DDR process because successful reintegration will only be possible with the support of the community.

### **Funding**

Finally, the critical issue of funding. DDR costs money. Funding is required for maintaining cantonment sites, supporting ex-combatants and their families during the process, transporting ex-combatants, providing cash and other incentive packages to encourage disarmament and reintegration. Funding should ideally be committed for the whole of the DDR process, since this fosters confidence and brings donor pressure to bear. The investment required to disband military machines is a fraction of the cost of conflict. However, it has often proved difficult to find sufficient, consistent donor support for DDR programmes. I often make the case to the Security Council and Member States that the relationship between security and long-term development is so

fundamental that a failure to invest in DDR and security sector reform risks the loss of all other investments. In Sierra Leone, for example, the DDR programme is short by some \$13.5 million, and at present funds are available only for another month. Over 55,000 ex-combatants have registered for reintegration. Of these about 31,000 have been absorbed into reintegration projects and 24,000 await access to reintegration programmes. The longer they wait, the greater the risk that ex-combatants lose faith in the process and the hope of returning to civilian life. This is a potential threat to the fragile stability which has been so hard-won. One general way to help alleviate such problems might be to seek from the assessed finances of the operation funds for “bridging” programmes and short term reintegration immediately after demobilisation.

Also, on the macro-economic level, economies can suffer a shock when absorbing thousands of ex-combatants with few marketable skills, often alongside returning refugees and IDPs. Funding for reintegration assistance can cushion the shock but this must be balanced with the need for aid to other vulnerable groups and communities recovering from conflict, since funds are drawn from the same pool of development aid. If the broader community goes without assistance, it may be less willing or able to reintegrate ex-combatants.

### **Children and women**

Another key lesson we have learned is that priority must be given to taking care of the special needs of child soldiers and women. These vulnerable groups may require special services to assist them in psycho-social recovery and reintegration. Plans must include

them at early stage and personnel with special expertise must be available from the outset.

### **Conclusion**

The lessons I have outlined have been learned through successes and failures of numerous partners in DDR. What is clear from the complexity of tasks is that no organization can do it all, though many organizations have expertise and experience in certain aspects of DDR. Thus, the first priority in planning for DDR should be to define the division of labour between the various partners. It is vital that actors on the ground not compete for resources and force donors to pick and choose activities rather than support a cohesive and integrated process.

DPKO, for its part, can help integrate various partners into DDR processes. We must build strong relationships with NGOs to ensure the skills and knowledge that you have acquired are brought into DDR efforts we undertake, and I look forward to working with you in the future to give these processes every chance of success.

Thank you.