The role of DDR in peacebuilding and sustaining peace

1. Introduction

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is a process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and transition to civilian life. DDR processes contribute to stabilization and peacebuilding efforts, and to creating an environment in which a peace process, political and social reconciliation, access to livelihoods and decent work, as well as sustainable development can take root. For these reasons, DDR processes should be seen as integral parts of efforts to consolidate peace and promote stability, and not merely as a set of sequenced technical programmes and activities. In the UN system, DDR is guided by the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS). The IDDRS outline the UN's integrated approach to DDR and provide evidence-based guidance that is crucial for informed decision making. They are a repository of lessons and best practices drawn from the experience of all UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes involved in supporting DDR, providing not only the necessary policy guidance, but also range of policy options.

Published in 2006, the IDDRS were developed by members of the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR (IAWG) and were based on lessons learned from DDR programmes implemented throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Acknowledging the changing nature of conflict characterized by political instability, a diversity of armed actors and a prevalence of weapons, ammunition and explosives, the 25 member IAWG took the decision in 2017 to revise the IDDRS, taking into account the operational experience gained since 2006. The revised IDDRS were successfully launched in November 2019., embracing the Secretary-General's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) to strengthen operational and policy coherence.

2. The new UN Approach to DDR

a) From Programme to DDR Process

DDR has typically been associated with DDR programmes in contexts where a peace agreement has been signed between armed groups and a national government, and where a UN peacekeeping operation is deployed in support of the implementation of an agreement. The UN views DDR programmes as an integral part of peacebuilding efforts because they aim to address 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 programmes provide an opportunity for members of armed forces and groups to hand over their weapons, to change from military to civilian status, and to receive support for their reintegration back into civilian life. Experience gathered over the last ten years has shown that DDR programmes are viable only when certain preconditions are in place:

- The signing of a negotiated ceasefire and/or peace agreement that provides a framework for DDR;
- Trust in the peace process;
- Willingness of the parties to the armed conflict to engage in DDR;

-        A minimum guarantee of security

However, the United Nations is increasingly engaged in settings where these preconditions are not present. Many contexts are characterized by the fragmentation and multiplication of armed groups, some of which sign peace agreements while others refuse. Similarly, armed conflict is often localized as armed groups fight each other, in addition to (or instead of) fighting State forces. Furthermore, in contexts of violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, peace agreements are often only a remote possibility. Responding to these developments, the revised IDDRS provide guidance not only on DDR programmes but also a range of other options for DDR practitioners under the umbrella of a DDR process. A DDR process may consist of any combination of (i) DDR programmes, which can be implemented when the listed preconditions are in place, (ii) DDR-related tools, which can be used both when the preconditions for a DDR programme are present and absent, and (iii) reintegration support, which can be provided when the preconditions for a DDR programme do not exist. The specific aims of DDR-related tools will vary according to the context. DDR-related tools may be used when the preconditions for DDR programmes are absent in order to contribute to stabilization, to make the returns of stability more tangible, and to generate more conducive environments for local and national peace processes. However, when the preconditions for a DDR programme are present, DDR-related tools may also be used before, during and after DDR programmes as complementary measures

b) DDR-related tools

The revised IDDRS comprise several flexible tools to enable practitioners to formulate conflict sensitive and context specific responses. These DDR-related tools are:

-        **Pre-DDR:** is a local-level transitional stabilization measure designed for those who are eligible for a DDR programme. Pre-DDR can be initiated when the implementation of a DDR programme is delayed.
-        **Transitional weapons and ammunition management (WAM):** may include (but is not limited to) weapons collection in exchange for community development projects, and support for the safer management of weapons and ammunition by communities.
-        **Community violence reduction (CVR):** is a bottom-up approach that helps to eliminate the main drivers of violence in communities by providing alternatives to recruitment into armed groups and building social cohesion. It includes a wide range of activities from labour intensive projects to community dialogue forums
-        **Initiatives to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organizations;**
-        **DDR support to mediation:** DDR practitioners can provide support to the drafting of DDR provisions in ceasefires and political agreements. They can also make proposals on the design and implementation of DDR programmes, provide advice on how to engage armed forces and groups on DDR issues, and contribute to the attainment of agreements.
-        **DDR support to transitional security arrangements:** DDR practitioners can provide support to the establishment of security-related confidence building measures as part of ongoing negotiations, ceasefire or peace agreements. This can include the temporary

establishment of legitimate non-state security providers or of mixed patrols and units made up of both state and non-state armed forces and groups.

In addition, DDR support to programmes for those leaving armed groups labelled and/or designated as terrorist organizations may also be provided by DDR practitioners in compliance with international legal and policy frameworks as well as relevant national legislation.

c) Reintegration under the sustaining peace approach

The revised IDDRS reframe DDR under the sustaining peace approach. This approach, manifested in the General Assembly and Security Council twin resolutions on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, recognises the need to work across the entire peace continuum from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping, to peacebuilding and development (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 [2016]). The implications of this are particularly important for reintegration, as the revised IDDRS recognize that support to the reintegration of former combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups can be provided not only in post-conflict contexts, but also during active conflict, when the preconditions for DDR programmes are not in place, as members of armed groups may decide to lay down their weapons at any stage of a conflict. Support to reintegration in this context may also complement DDR-related tools, such as when reintegration support follows Community Violence Reduction.

Support to sustainable reintegration that addresses the needs of affected groups and harnesses their capacities, either as part of DDR programmes or not, requires a thorough understanding of the drivers of conflict, the specific needs of men, women, children and youth, their coping mechanisms and the opportunities for peace. Reintegration assistance should ensure the transition from individually focused to community approaches. This is so that resources can be applied to the benefit of the community in a balanced manner minimizing the stigmatization of former armed group members and contributing to reconciliation and reconstruction of the social fabric. In non-mission contexts, where funding mechanisms are not linked to peacekeeping assessed budgets, the use of DDR-related tools should, even in the initial planning phases, be coordinated with community-based reintegration support in order to ensure sustainability.

3. DDR contribution to the peacebuilding and sustaining peace approach

a) A mutually reinforcing relationship between prevention and sustaining peace

Integrated DDR processes work towards sustaining peace. Whereas peacebuilding activities are typically understood as a response to conflict once it has already broken out, the sustaining peace approach recognizes the need to work along the entire peace continuum and towards the prevention of conflict before it occurs. In this way the UN should support those capacities, institutions and attitudes that help communities to resolve conflicts peacefully. The implications of working along the peace continuum are particularly important for the provision of reintegration support. As part of the sustaining peace approach, DDR support to those individuals leaving armed groups can be facilitated not only in post-conflict situations, but also during conflict escalation and ongoing conflict.

Community Violence Reduction as a DDR-related tool as well as community-based approaches to reintegration, in particular, are well positioned to operationalize the sustaining peace approach. They address the needs of former combatants, persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups, and receiving communities, while necessitating the multidimensional/sectoral expertise of several UN and regional actors across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. Integrated DDR is also characterized by flexibility, including in terms of funding structures, to adapt quickly to the dynamic and often volatile conflict and post-conflict environment. DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support, in whichever combination they are implemented, need to be synchronized through integrated coordination mechanisms, ensure sensitivity to conflict dynamics and potential unintended effects, and carefully monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and.

b) DDR linkages to peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Integrated DDR reaches across all three pillars of the UN system and therefore brings together the whole of the system. Peace and Security, Development and Human Rights actors together define the UN conflict-sensitive approaches, which enable joint analysis and effective strategic planning to envisage effective long-term engagement already in the design of immediate responses to violent conflict. This coordination has allowed for the implementation of several of the Secretary-General's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) as highlighted in the following exemplary cases.

DDR support in non-mission settings

With the new UN Peace and Security Architecture in place since January 2019, DPO is considered a system-wide service provider on DDR and the IAWG has introduced DDR support to non-mission settings into the new UN Approach to DDR. This way, DDR support can now be provided beyond Peace Operations and good offices arrangements, and particularly to UN Resident Coordinators. Thus far, Resident Coordinators in the Lake Chad Basin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Sierra Leone have received technical assistance and advice on the planning, implementation and evaluation of DDR processes. DDR support in non-mission settings can add value to broader peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts through the multifaceted functions and approaches that it can take. With the new UN Peace and Security Architecture in place since January 2019, the scope of work on non-mission settings is certain to further increase for DPO with its new mandate as system-wide service provider, which will need to ensure the systematic provision of timely and coordinated responses to requests from non-mission settings, including through well-established partnerships.

Partnerships

As part of the sustaining peace agenda and the Action for Peacekeeping initiatives, DPO is strengthening partnerships on DDR with other UN entities as well as regional and sub-regional organizations as well as with international financial institutions. The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) was established in March 2005 by the United Nations Executive Committee on Peace and Security

(ECPS). The IAWG was mandated to improve the Organization's performance in DDR and to develop a coherent UN approach to DDR in both peacekeeping and non-peacekeeping settings. The IAWG is jointly chaired by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is currently composed of 25 UN entities.[1] The objectives of the IAWG are: To develop and maintain cutting-edge DDR policies and resources; To provide technical and strategic advice to DDR practitioners in the field; To monitor developments and evaluate results in DDR.

In addition to the UN 25-member Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR – to which the African Union is a permanent observer, and which is also supported by the European Union – a close partnership has been forged with the World Bank in support of national authorities in different settings where DDR is implemented. Besides operational cooperation in several DDR processes, the UN and World Bank support the African Union DDR Capacity Program (AU DDRCP) since 2012. The programme aims at strengthening the strategic and operational capacities of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in designing and implementing DDR initiatives. In 2019, the framework entered its third phase with the objective to streamline DDR in the overall political process and conflict resolution across the continent; reinforce operational response through urgent technical and capacity support to Member States and PSOs; and foster institutional capacity building, knowledge management and cross institutional learning in line with the national and regional policy frameworks.

Furthermore, DPO-ODA initiated a joint project on "Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) in a Changing DDR context" in 2017, resulting in i) the development of a practical handbook as well as a training package for DDR practitioners, as well as ii) the establishment of a joint technical assistance mechanism. A Group of Friends of DDR was established in 2019 to strengthen the strategic exchange with Member States that support DDR as host Governments, donors and/or political advocates and to reinforce DDR policy and practice at the political level.

Community Violence Reduction

DDR processes increasingly include a Community Violence Reduction component as a direct contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere. Community Violence Reduction is an inclusive DDR-related tool that directly responds to the presence of active and/or former members of armed groups and is designed to promote security and stability in both mission and non-mission contexts. The overarching theory of change of Community Violence Reduction is that its activities will foster social cohesion and provide former combatants and other at-risk individuals with alternatives to joining armed groups, and support communities in becoming active participants in the reduction of armed violence.

Community Violence Reduction works directly with target communities to find solutions to causes of armed violence from within, and explicitly targets youth at risk of recruitment by armed groups

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[1] Members are CTED, DGC, DPPA, DPPA/PBSO, ODA, OHCHR, ILO, IOM, OSAA, OSRSG CAAC, UNAIDS, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDIR, UNITAR, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP, WHO and the World Bank, in addition to the co-chairs DPO and UNDP. OLA also participates in IAWG meetings and activities.

in addition to ex-combatants. By Utilizing a bottom-up approach, emphasizing community engagement, it amplifies the voices of young people and addresses the often pressing issue of youth unemployment. Originally introduced in Haiti in 2006, Community Violence Reduction has gained traction in recent years as DDR operations have increasingly been mandated in contexts where the preconditions for DDR are not in place. In response, Community Violence Reduction is implemented with three main overarching objectives: to help create the necessary conditions for successful DDR; to support DDR initiatives; and, in some cases, to replace traditional DDR programmes. There is no uniform or standard template for Community Violence Reduction, although all such programmes share the goal of reducing armed violence and sustaining peace. Community Violence Reduction can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from the prevention of (re-)recruitment to improving the capacities of communities to absorb ex-combatants and associated groups. Community Violence Reduction may also be used as stop-gap reinsertion assistance at the community level, while reintegration is still at the planning and/or resource mobilization stage. Community Violence Reduction is implemented by four UN Peacekeeping Operations and – since October 2019 – for the first time in one special political mission.[2]

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[2] The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); the African Union/United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID); and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH).