



Helpdesk Research Report

Lessons from DDR programmes

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Question

What lessons can be learned from DDR programmes, in particular those implemented in Africa?

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1. Overview

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes aim to support ex-combatants in (post-)conflict situations, promote security and stability, and create conditions for sustainable peace and development. Participants in DDR programmes include adult male ex-combatants, as well as female and child combatants, others carrying out supporting roles (e.g. cooks, sex slaves) in armed groups, and dependents of combatants. Beneficiaries would include these groups (and their dependents) as well as communities into which they are reintegrated. While the literature on DDR programmes and their evolution, as well as DDR experiences in individual countries (notably in Africa), is considerable and broadly consistent, there is little on the long-term effectiveness of DDR interventions.

DDR programming has evolved significantly over the past few decades in response to changing situations and emerging challenges. Traditional DDR programmes were implemented in post-conflict situations where a peace accord was in place and involved defined armed groups. These followed the sequence disarmament, then demobilisation, then reintegration and were relatively straightforward to implement. Second generation programmes emerged to address situations where conflict could be ongoing, a peace accord is not in place/ineffective, there are multiple, diverse armed groups/combatants, and lines between combatants and civilians are blurred. While traditional DDR focused on ex-

combatants, second generation DDR programmes encompass communities and thus takes a wider approach to peace building. They draw on regular assessments to design activities in response to on-ground developments, not necessarily following the disarmament-demobilisation-reintegration sequence. Muggah and O'Donnell (2015) identify 'next generation DDR' programmes which are even more flexible: they can use force (as opposed to relying on voluntary participation); they are even wider in scope - tied to national development goals as well as security sector reform and transitional justice; and, most importantly, they are negotiated based on the local context rather than following a set DDR formula.

Despite this evolution, **many challenges remain in designing and implementing DDR programmes:** conduct of DDR in 'hot' conflict situations is extremely difficult, particularly where foreign fighters are involved; reintegration is often the weakest link in DDR – not surprising given the economic insecurity that characterises (post-)conflict settings; and DDR suffers from a 'public relations challenge' making it hard to enthruse donors and leading to short-term funding. As DDR has widened in scope, ensuring integration and coordination among the various actors involved has become harder, at the same time expectations can be unrealistic. Further, DDR programmes can be vulnerable to local exploitation, and there is minimal post-programme monitoring of participants and assessment of effectiveness.

Key lessons to emerge from the literature review are as follows:

- **Need for national ownership and political will:** DDR initiatives should be nationally owned, with government, armed forces and civil society groups all playing a role. International partners can provide vital funding and technical support, since national capacity will typically be weak.
- **Funding mechanism:** DDR programmes need reliable funding streams to ensure both timely and adequate funding. One option could be setting up a 'DDR line' within a relevant multi-donor trust fund.
- **Careful assessment and preparation:** DDR programmes should be based on careful assessment of the situation, to identify combatants, types and numbers of weapons, as well as areas of return and resettlement and reintegration opportunities and services.
- **Transparency:** Efforts should be made to ensure transparency in DDR programmes, particularly in eligibility criteria and decisions about exiting. National ownership carries risks of DDR funding being exploited by local groups: transparency and an oversight role for international partners will help mitigate this.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Linked to transparency is the need for more effective monitoring and evaluation, particularly of outcomes: what happens to combatants when they exit DDR programmes, does violence recur?
- **Widen scope and address specific needs of different groups of participants, notably women and children:** DDR programmes typically target male ex-combatants, but there are many others who should be included, e.g. female and minor ex-combatants, those playing support roles in armed groups, and dependents. These groups, e.g. women, children, the disabled, will need DDR programmes geared to their specific needs.
- **Ensure communities benefit:** It is vital that DDR programmes, particularly in the reintegration phase, provide tangible benefits to host communities as well as to ex-combatants. This will aid the process of reconciliation and social reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as support sustainable peace and development.

- **Strengthen reintegration phase:** This is often the weakest link in DDR processes. Efforts should be made to identify suitable livelihood opportunities and provide appropriate vocational training to ex-combatants.
- **Linkages to wider reforms and development:** DDR programmes are generally short-term. In order to be effective and deliver sustained results, they must be linked to wider reforms and strategies to promote national development, make the security sector efficient and accountable, and promote transitional justice.
- **Coordination among donors and national partners:** DDR is a complex process involving many diverse actors. Integration and coordination between these is important, and should at minimum be strengthened between donor partners.
- **Lessons from DDR experience in Africa:** Reviews of a number of DDR initiatives in Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes Region, Sudan, Somalia and Central African Republic) confirm the issues identified in the literature review. While these programmes have had positive effects (e.g. engaging ex-combatants in productive activities, building social cohesion) common problems include insufficient resources, lack of coordination among donor agencies, weaknesses in reintegration and lack of transparency.

2. Definitions and activities

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes aim to support ex-combatants, promote security and stability and create the conditions for sustainable peace and development. Failure to address the special requirements of former combatants can not only undermine development but also threaten what can sometimes be a fragile peace (UNDP, 2013). DDR programmes have three components:

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 programs’ (UN, 2005 in World Bank, 2009: 3). Disarmament activities will often begin with an assessment and information gathering on the size, profile and deployment of armed groups, and the types, number and location of their weapons. Weapons collection should follow information and awareness raising campaigns about the disarmament process: this can entail gathering combatants at pick-up points and moving them to disarmament sites. Collected weapons must be counted, stored securely and, ideally, quickly destroyed. Where more than one armed group is being disarmed, it is important to ensure this is done at the same rate to avoid a sudden imbalance in military capabilities (World Bank, 2009).

Demobilisation

‘Demobilisation is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation encompasses the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion’ (UN, 2005 in World Bank, 2009: 4). Demobilisation typically consists of the following activities: registration and documentation with eligibility determined through a screening process, health screening of ex-combatants (e.g. for HIV/AIDs,

other chronic illness, disability); pre-discharge orientation in which the DDR process and the challenges involved in transitioning from military to civilian life are explained; and issuance of discharge documents providing eligibility for reinsertion and reintegration assistance (World Bank, 2009). Reinsertion is short-term assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer term process of reintegration, to help cover their basic needs and can be in-kind or cash (World Bank, 2009: 4).

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’ (UN, 2005 in World Bank, 2009: 5). This is the third and arguably most difficult aspect of the DDR process. It should be based on a detailed assessment of beneficiaries, areas of return and resettlement and reintegration opportunities and services. Reintegration includes the following activities: provision of general information, counselling and referral to support services within the DDR programme; economic reintegration, e.g. vocational training, livelihood opportunities; and social reintegration to build trust between ex-combatants and communities receiving them (World Bank, 2009). It is now recognised that in the reintegration phase should move as quickly as possible from focusing on ex-combatants to focusing on communities: it is important for long-term reintegration that communities also benefit from DDR programmes (World Bank, 2009; www.unddr.org). For example, reintegration projects for ex-combatants could entail public works projects for community infrastructure such as roads and schools, or business development initiatives which involve community members.

3. Evolution of DDR programmes

While the concept of DDR emerged in the 1960s, DDR practice has evolved significantly in the intervening decades in response to changing circumstances and emerging challenges.

Traditional DDR

The first wave of DDR programmes or ‘traditional’ DDR were designed to address the needs of ex-combatants in post-conflict situations and were largely focused on organised military units and armed forces. Traditional DDR followed the sequence of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration outlined above. The preconditions to be in place before a DDR programme began included: signing of a negotiated peace agreement to provide a legal framework for DDR; trust in the peace process; willingness of the parties to the conflict to engage in DDR; and a minimum guarantee of security (UN, 2010: 4).

Traditional DDR programmes were largely implemented following the end of international or civil wars, in which, typically, there was a definitive victory for one party or an internationally mandated peace operation was put in place. Examples include El Salvador, Guatemala, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Cambodia, Haiti and the Philippines. While results were mixed, such programmes were relatively straightforward to implement and followed a defined sequence (Muggah and O’ Donnell, 2015).

Second generation DDR

Second generation DDR programmes emerged in response to changing agendas for peace and security operations, and in recognition of the fact that the preconditions for traditional DDR programming did not

always exist. Following the Brahimi Report's conclusion that DDR was 'key to immediate post-conflict stability and reducing the likelihood of conflict recurrence' (Cockayne and O'Neil, 2015: 26), a UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR was set up in 2005. It developed the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), published in 2006, to provide guidance in addressing various dimensions (political, security, etc.) of post-conflict environments. The IDDRS took a more human security-oriented approach to DDR, and abandoned the fixed sequential programming (preconditions, disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration) followed previously, instead providing a 'principled framework capable of adaptation to a variety of conflict scenarios' (ibid.: 27).

Second generation and traditional DDR programmes share the same objectives of supporting peace processes, creating political space and contributing to a secure environment. But while the latter focus on ex-combatants, the former encompass the larger communities that are affected by armed violence. Second generation DDR seeks to create wider conditions for peace and development; this is consistent with the more comprehensive approaches to peacekeeping taken by donor governments and multilateral agencies such as the UN. Second generation programmes take an evidence-based approach, drawing on regular assessments and designing activities in response to on-ground developments.

Second generation DDR programmes were especially common following wars in Western and Central Africa, the Balkans and Southeast Asia. Muggah and O'Donnell (2015) note that many of these settings were experiencing rolling internal conflict; the lines between combatants and civilians were blurred; peace agreements (where in place) were seldom successful in fully bringing violence to an end; they exhibited regional and transnational dynamics; and were increasingly sustained by organised criminal networks. The expectations of second generation DDR programmes were thus much higher than those of traditional DDR at the same time as the challenges they faced were much greater.

Next generation DDR

Despite the shift from strictly defined traditional DDR (based on achievement of preconditions and following a specific sequence), to more flexible second generation DDR programmes, these were still seen as too formulaic and ineffective. Reintegration was seen as the weakest link in the DDR process, but there was also criticism of funding initiatives targeting combatants and their families, and of the disconnect between DDR and wider recovery and development activities which could benefit traumatised communities – this in turn led to more and more development agencies stepping back from DDR altogether (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015: 4).

In response to the proliferation of non-state armed groups across multiple settings, Muggah and O'Donnell (2015) note the emergence of more diverse and forceful 'next generation' DDR interventions. They highlight a number of differences between next generation DDR and traditional/second generation DDR: a) next generation DDR often takes place *before* peace agreements have even been reached in non-permissive security environments; b) it targets groups that may not be explicit parties to an eventual peace agreement; c) it takes a 'stick rather than carrot' approach, thereby revisiting the voluntary nature of DDR that was a core tenet of preceding DDR interventions;¹ d) it is wider in scope, moving from narrowly defined standalone interventions to activities purposefully connected to national development objectives; e) DDR is seen as intimately connected to security sector reform, transitional justice and state building efforts; f) DDR is reconceived as dynamic political processes that have to be negotiated in each

¹ This was applied in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, to deal with some 2,000 hard-core FDLR fighters who continued to ravage the Eastern Congo in the 2000s: 'After ten years of being offered an option to voluntarily join a DDR program, it became clear that an alternative solution was warranted to manage the FLDR' (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015: 4).

context and are fundamentally connected to local conditions (Muggah & O'Donnell, 2015: 5-6). '(M)ost, if not all, aspects of DDR are negotiated and decided in the context of highly localised political and economic expediencies. An intensely contested period of bargaining, rather than prescriptions set from above, often defines the real parameters of a DDR program' (ibid: 6). Reinsertion and reintegration are supposed to follow disarmament and demobilisation, however carrying them out first can be a more feasible and effective approach – providing combatants with assistance can create incentives for them to give up their weapons. This is particularly the case in countries with a strong gun culture, e.g. Afghanistan.

On-going challenges

Despite this evolution of DDR to address changing realities, challenges remain:

- **Unrealistic expectations** – DDR has become increasingly linked to wider agendas for stability, recovery and reconstruction, and state building. 'In the process, expectations of what DDR can reasonably accomplish are expanding beyond what is realistically feasible' (ibid: 6).
- **Funding** – Short-term budgetary mechanisms deeply constrains the effectiveness of DDR programming. 'The absence of a reliable funding stream for DDR programming means that DDR practitioners cannot reliably plan, and places DDR at the mercy of fickle political winds' (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015: 155).
- **Conduct of DDR in 'hot' conflict situations** – Since 2010 DDR initiatives are increasingly being carried out in situations where conflict is on-going, e.g. the Sahel, North and Central Africa and the Middle East. Cockayne and O'Neil ask 'whether such environments are conducive to positive DDR outcomes if there is no buy-in from parties to the conflict in the DDR process and on-going violence prevents the level of economic development necessary to support the reintegration of ex-combatants into alternative livelihoods? Additionally, and importantly, do concurrent offensive operations against the same groups targeted for DDR actively undermine the latter?' (2015: 158).
- **Transnational elements** – Another characteristic of 'modern' conflicts, particularly in the regions listed above, is the presence of foreign fighters and movement of combatants across borders. Conducting DDR programmes in such circumstances is obviously challenging.
- **Economic insecurity and haphazard reintegration** – DDR is premised on the assumption that economic recovery and job creation – leading to absorption of ex-combatants – will take place post-conflict, but in reality economic insecurity means this rarely happens (UN, 2010). Reinsertion and reintegration are seen as the weakest link in the DDR process. As well as economic insecurity, this stems from a failure to assess local economic opportunities and market dynamics and identify what would be suited to DDR participants, and from lack of diversification in vocational training leading to gluts in certain sectors (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015).
- **Local exploitation of DDR programming** – The stress on national ownership of DDR, coupled with the fact that it is increasingly being implemented without a peace accord in place, leaves DDR support 'vulnerable to manipulation and abuse for local political, patronage, intelligence and even military purposes....and complicates the task of principled engagement necessary to improve programming' (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015: 158).
- **Respect for human rights** – Donors face 'moral hazards' in the increasingly messy settings in which they have to implement DDR, e.g. how to ensure efforts to promote human rights do not

conflict with the need to access conflict parties? how to ensure support for national DDR does not appear to reward combatants for their prior violence? (Cockayne & O’Neil, 2015: 30)

- **Monitoring and effectiveness assessment** – Cockayne and O’Neil note that the focus in DDR programming appears to be on outputs rather than outcomes. There is minimal or no post-release monitoring of ex-combatants ‘so there is no way of knowing that impact DDR programming is having on participants’ behaviour or choices, or whether they are returning to conflict or violent extremism’ (2015: 155).
- **Lack of political will among donors for DDR** – Cockayne and O’Neil (2015) argue that there is a lack of political will to champion DDR partly because of the limited empirical evidence on effectiveness of DDR programming, and partly because DDR ‘suffers from a public relations challenge: it is difficult to get donors excited about funding programmes for ex-combatants – not always the most politically sympathetic group’ (2015: 159 and UN, 2010).
- **Integration and coordination** – As DDR interventions have become wider in scope (given the necessary links between security and development work), ensuring effective integration and coordination of different activities between diverse donors has become more challenging (UN, 2010 and Kolln, 2011).
- **Need for more research** – DDR-related research has expanded significantly over the past thirty years (Muggah, 2010), but there remains considerable scope for improvement, in particular for a closer nexus between researchers and practitioners, so that research can effectively inform programme design and implementation.

4. Programming aspects

Based on the evolution of DDR programming described above, and the on-going challenges faced in this regard, the main aspects of current DDR programming (how these are being/should be conducted) are outlined below:

DDR actors: national ownership and political will

DDR practitioners include a wide range of national and international actors. However, overall responsibility for DDR programming should rest with the former: ‘DDR programmes suffer when external actors fail to establish true partnership with national institutions and local authorities, producing programmes which are insufficiently adapted to the dynamics of local contexts, unsupportive of the capacities of local institutions and unresponsive to the needs of local populations’.²

While national governments should have the lead role, national ownership ‘requires the participation of a range of state and non-state actors at national, provincial and local levels’.³ Armed forces and groups usually decide, in consultation with other stakeholders, on combatants to participate in DDR programmes, and can participate in the development of DDR policies and institutions. CSOs can support DDR programme implementation, while the media has a role in raising public awareness and building confidence in DDR programmes. Side by side with national ownership is the requirement for political will: ‘DDR is a politically driven process... The success of the DDR process depends on the political will of the parties to enter into the process in a genuine manner and in many instances for government partners to

² www.unddr.org

³ www.unddr.org

enable and support the implementation of a DDR process' after official agreement on this has been reached.⁴

In providing technical and financial support for DDR, international actors fill a critical gap in post-conflict situations when national capacity is often weak. The UN system is among the major supporters of DDR programmes, often as part of peacekeeping missions. In 2010 UNDP was working in over 30 countries on DDR-related issues (UN, 2010: 9). Others include the World Bank and regional development banks, bilateral partners (usually provide funding for DDR programmes), and NGOs who are often chosen as implementing partners. World Bank involvement in DDR began in 1992 with the Uganda Veterans Assistance Program, and as of 2009 it had supported about 21 DDR projects in over 15 countries (World Bank, 2009: 1).

Participants and beneficiaries

DDR participants and beneficiaries constitute a far wider group than just adult combatants carrying weapons. Members of armed groups can include female and child combatants, as well as a range of people engaged in support roles, e.g. cooks, messengers, sex slaves. All of these should be eligible for participation in DDR programmes. Beneficiaries of DDR programmes are even wider: spouses, children and other dependents of ex-combatants, as well as communities where ex-combatants resettle. The literature stresses the need, particularly in the reintegration phase, to focus on communities and not just on ex-combatants, to ensure that they benefit from DDR.

Two groups of ex-combatants need special attention in DDR programmes: children and women. Children (boys and girls under the age of 18) typically represent 10 to 40 percent of the strength of armed forces and groups; they can be associated with both state and non-government groups. International law forbids armed forces from using children under the age of: this is actually a war crime. Since they should never have been recruited in the first place, former child combatants cannot be demobilised or disarmed – they should go through specialist 'release and reintegration programmes' (involving child protection agencies) rather than DDR programmes. Further, since recruitment of children by armed groups is a human rights violation, children can be released from these at any time: this is not dependent on a peace accord being in place.⁵

Women and girls can have diverse roles in conflict situations: combatants, supporters or those associated with armed groups (including sex slaves), and dependents. Women have generally been excluded from DDR programmes for a range of reasons: lack of funding, capacity, gender discrimination/stigma, women's limited access to information and services. 'Ensuring women's access to DDR programmes, addressing their specific needs and protecting them from violence is critical to ensure successful reintegration'.⁶ Specific needs could include separate shelter and sanitation facilities, treatment and counselling for sexual and gender-based violence, reproductive health services, childcare, vocational training geared to women and so on. A World Bank note on DDR points out that female former combatants 'who have achieved equality on the battlefield may find it difficult to return to more traditional female roles' (World Bank, 2009: 2-3). This again highlights the need for women-specific DDR programming.

A third vulnerable group needing special DDR assistance are disabled people. Disabled and chronically ill former combatants will need help such as health screening, treatment and rehabilitation, reintegration

⁴ www.unddr.org

⁵ www.unddr.org

⁶ www.unddr.org

assistance to allow them to live independently and community-based care. A World Bank DDR programme in Uganda found that about 17 per cent of former combatants suffered from HIV/AIDS, leading to the design of a specific health component within the programme (World Bank, 2009: 3).

Linkages to wider reforms for peace and development

If DDR is to be really effective in achieving the goals of sustained peace and development, it is important that it is linked to wider reform efforts and development programmes (www.unddr.org). Three aspects are particularly relevant: linking DDR to national development strategies and programmes, linking it to security sector reform, and linking it to transitional justice initiatives.

Broader development strategies could include poverty reduction strategies, multi-year national development plans and so on, geared towards generating economic growth, creating employment, strengthening governance and improving human development outcomes. DDR initiatives to create jobs and support ex-combatants as well as host communities can go only so far (particularly given the short-term, limited funding nature of most DDR programmes): for the effects to be sustainable they must be linked into such wider national development efforts.

Security sector reform (SSR) aims to make a country's security sector – defined in the broadest sense to include traditional security forces (state and non-state) as well as justice sector, governance and oversight mechanisms – more effective and more accountable. SSR is based on the premise that an ineffective and poorly governed security sector is an obstacle to peace, stability, poverty reduction and sustainable development (Wulf, 2011: 339). The UN defines it as 'a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the security sector, led by national authorities, and that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the state and its peoples, without discrimination and with full respect of human rights and the rule of law' (UN, 2012: 14). Clearly, there is a lot of convergence between SSR and DDR. The two are mutually reinforcing processes, as successful DDR contributes to community security and frees up resources for SSR activities that support the development of efficient, affordable security structures. Conversely, effective SSR measures help foster a level of trust and confidence that contribute to an effective DDR process, including by providing necessary reassurances that weapons are no longer necessary'.⁷

Transitional justice refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures that different countries have implemented in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses. These measures include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations programs, and various kinds of institutional reforms.⁸ A history of unaddressed massive abuses is likely to be socially divisive, to generate mistrust between groups and in the institutions of the state, and to hamper or slow down the achievement of security and development goals (ibid).

There is thus considerable convergence between transitional justice and DDR: both are critical for reconciliation and sustained peace-building. The two processes should therefore be carried out in a coordinated manner so they are mutually reinforcing. Examples include: integrating information on transitional justice measures into DDR field assessment and design; incorporating a commitment to human rights and international humanitarian law in the design of DDR programmes; and screening of ex-combatants' human rights records in case they are being integrated into the security sector. Another is 'creating links between locally-based justice processes and truth commissions on the one hand, and community-based reintegration strategies on the other: this could foster acceptance of returning ex-

⁷ www.unddr.org

⁸ <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>

combatants among reintegration communities'. 'Ex-combatants could also play a direct role in reparations programmes, either by providing direct reparation when they have individual responsibility for violations or, when appropriate, by contributing to reparations projects aimed at addressing community needs'.⁹

5. Case studies

A World Bank report noted that, of the DDR programmes implemented in the two decades up to 2009, about two-thirds had been in African countries (World Bank, 2009: 1). The brief case studies below highlight some of the challenges and lessons from DDR implementation in Africa.

Democratic Republic of Congo and Great Lakes Region, Central Africa

The Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) was implemented in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa between 2002 and 2009. Financed by the World Bank and 13 other donors, the (almost) USD 500 million programme aimed to 'enhance the prospects for stabilisation and recovery in the region' by supporting the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in seven countries involved in regional conflict during the 1990s and early 2000s, but mainly played out on the territory of DRC: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Republic of Congo (RoC), DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. MDRP was 'arguably, ... by far the largest DDR programme in the world, in terms of number of states involved, individuals demobilised and levels of funding' (Kolln, 2011: 4).

MDRP successfully demobilised around 300,000 ex-combatants, but the results varied significantly from one country to the next. In DRC, which had the largest DDR programme, around 102,000 ex-combatants were demobilised, but reintegration proved far less effective with only 58 per cent reintegrated (Kolln, 2014: 4). Other problems included capacity issues, corruption, and lack of support from parts of DRC's government leading to delays and disruption in DDR efforts. An evaluation report found that the performance of donors and international implementing partners varied considerably: 'While organisations such as Save the Children UK successfully reintegrated more than 3,000 child soldiers, others like UNDP struggled to meet their targets (UNDP placed only 83 ex-combatants out of a target of 10,000 in reintegration projects) and were slow to respond' (Kolln, 2014: 4). It is worth noting that a number of special projects focusing on child soldiers were implemented under MDRP by UNICEF, Save the Children, International Rescue Committee and others.

Sudan

UNDP implemented a four-year project on the reintegration component of the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme from 2009 to 2012. It was implemented in a situation of on-going conflict and difficulties of access in several areas. An end-of-project evaluation found that the project had made a small contribution in helping ex-combatants re-establish livelihoods in their communities, but its contribution to helping communities deal with issues of conflict, insecurity and arms proliferation was limited. There was a long time lag between disarmament/demobilisation and reintegration, negating 'some of the potential benefits of conventional DDR programmes' (Bhattacharjea, 2012: 4). A further criticism was that 'lack of independent verification in the early phases of the DDR process (demobilisation) has sometimes diluted integrity of the economic support and the potential benefits to genuine ex-combatants' (ibid.). Lack of coordination among various teams in UNDP and the fact that there was no common focal point for external stakeholders to interact were also highlighted.

⁹ www.unddr.org

However, the biggest criticism was that the programme was focused on delivering on a seven-year old agreement (Comprehensive Peace Agreement), not on the needs of communities and vulnerable sections of the population (ibid). Key recommendations were for strengthened verification in selection of future programme participants, and for increased investment in the community-based approach to reintegration.

Somalia

Contemporary Somalia exemplifies many of the challenges facing DDR. DDR programmes in Somalia are being implemented in a situation of on-going conflict, military as well as counter-terrorism operations, and in the absence of a peace accord. The government is fighting Al-Shabaab with military support from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and non-military support from the UN. There are a number of small-scale DDR programmes underway, mostly funded by the UN, as well as bilateral country counterterrorism initiatives. DDR programmes are focused exclusively on Al-Shabaab defectors and combatants: other armed groups such as militias, clan forces, etc. are not included, even though long-term peace cannot happen without disarming and reintegrating them.

Felbab-Brown's study (in Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015) of DDR efforts in Somali identified a number of challenges and problems which have led to DDR falling far short of the International DDR Standards. Lack of transparency with regard to entry and exit criteria and processes is a major one, stemming from Somali control of these. There are also questions about the voluntary nature of DDR participation, given that, often, the alternative for defectors/detainees is military court trial and death. Conversely, some former Al-Shabab fighters do not want to leave DDR facilities because they feel secure there. Somali government actors have been forceful in demanding international support (funding and staffing) for DDR, even threatening to execute defectors and detainees if this is not provided. Funding is generally short term, ad hoc and uncertain. Lack of international funding (as well as capacity on the part of Somali actors) means the special needs of vulnerable groups such as women and minors are not being addressed in DDR programmes.

The difficult security situation means donor agencies (notably the UN) have limited physical access to facilities. Given this, and the high political sensitivities and compromises donors have to make in supporting DDR, Felbab-Brown declares: 'the international community needs to judge carefully at what point its engagement in suboptimal processes and with problematic official interlocutors still produces sufficient humanitarian benefits and reinforces conflict mitigation, and at what point it merely creates moral hazard (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015: 108).

Nonetheless, she concludes that DDR programming has improved in Somalia – and has helped save lives - and international support for this should continue. Her recommendations include (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015: 135-137): there should be greater transparency in entry and exit criteria and processes – while the Somali government will not give up its decision making, the UN should have access to information and an oversight role; transparency and monitoring in other programme aspects should also be strengthened; DDR facilities should include provisions for women and children, and there should be DDR programmes specifically for these groups; mechanisms to ensure regular funding of DDR should be put in place; DDR programming and continued donor (UN) engagement should be based on strategic assessments of different situations. The latter would include examination of the 'moral hazard' question: is UN involvement in suboptimal processes helping conflict mitigation or is it encouraging extortion and legitimising highly problematic policies and actions on the part of local actors?

Central African Republic (CAR)

The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), part of the UN Peacekeeping Operation in CAR, is implementing a pre-DDR project. This aims to contribute positively to the reduction of security threats in communities, enhance the work skills of combatants, contribute to building social cohesion and, as the name implies, create the foundation for a future DDR programme. Pre-DDR activities include many that would feature in a DDR programme: registration of combatants; sensitisation and mobilisation of armed groups, communities and government for pre-DDR; progressive securitisation of arms in containers; provision of short term cash-for-work opportunities through labour intensive work; and activities geared towards peace building and increasing social cohesion.

A mid-term evaluation of the pre-DDR programme (UN DDR Section, DPO, 2016) found that it was contributing to stabilising communities, ex-combatants were engaged in productive activities and it had helped increase social cohesion due to members of different armed groups working together. It also found that the pre-DDR programme had created a strong basis for the future DDR programme. However, weaknesses included limited coverage due to lack of resources and mission support, weak national ownership and therefore likely sustainability, and insufficient linkages with other relevant projects such as to a children's release and reintegration programme supported by UNICEF. A key concern was the failure to mobilise all armed groups.

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Key websites

- United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre: <http://www.unddr.org/>

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