Oxfam International

OI Policy Compendium Note on Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR)[1]

Overview: Oxfam International's position on DDR

DDR involves the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life at the end of a conflict. It is a vital part of the transition from war to peace. When it fails, it can help undermine the post-conflict peace process, and return a country to war.

The international experience of DDR programmes varies significantly. To be successful, each programme should have the following foundations:
- The political will of all parties to the conflict – the most important factor;
- National and international commitment to see DDR as only one part of post-conflict recovery, and to work on other areas simultaneously;
- Clear leadership and co-ordination, linked to an organisational and technical capacity to deliver;
- International support, engagement, and, where necessary, pressure to deliver.

Programmes require careful design to be effective:
- Set clear parameters within aims and objectives – looking at the quality as well as quantity of assistance, targeting, types of benefits and incentives, timetables, and disbursement mechanisms;
- Have a focus on benefits to vulnerable groups, including women and children, and the wider community, not only ex-combatants;
- Address the need to collect small arms and light weapons from civilians, not just the military;
- Clarity and transparency of information-gathering and communication;
- Sufficient and sustained focus on reintegration, to embed non-violence into society.

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1. Background

Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes are now established as an integral part of post-conflict reconstruction, and a key component to promoting and establishing peace. In the last decade, several hundred thousand ex-combatants from more than 30 countries have taken part in DDR programmes.

That said, each element of DDR presents major challenges, and results of DDR programmes to date have been patchy at best. They are complex – involving political, legal, administrative, organisational, financial, logistical and security aspects that must be taken into account at each stage – and pitfalls are numerous. Post-conflict environments are exceedingly challenging contexts for any intervention. But we know for sure how important they are; a failure to disarm – as in Central America in the 1990s – leads to persistent high levels of armed violence and hinders reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Within the UN, DDR operations are led by the Department for Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO), which tends to take responsibility for disarmament and demobilisation, and UNDP, which tends to lead on reintegration. The UN is currently attempting to integrate its DDR work; it is too early to say whether this is successful. DDR is frequently mandated by UN Security Council resolutions, terms and timelines are determined by outside donors and the process is usually part of on-going peace

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[1] This paper does not address considerations of peace versus justice before DDR can be implemented – the demand for amnesty and the persistent climate of impunity can be a major impediment to progress on DDR and the acceptance of ex-combatants into communities.

operations; thus by definition it is top-down. Some donors are looking for alternative approaches, emphasising local and participatory approaches to defining community security and community-centred violence reduction, creating genuine ownership from below.

Oxfam has offered long-term support for war-affected communities and ex-combatants in Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Bosnia. In Angola in 2002, when 85,000 ex-combatants and 280,000 dependents gathered in 'quartering' sites around the country, Oxfam provided water, sanitation and hygiene-promotion services. And it has carried out similar work in Mozambique and El Salvador.

2. Oxfam International's position on DDR

Without the following ***four key foundations***, DDR programmes will not be effective.

1. ***Political will and participation from all parties to the conflict.*** This is the most important foundation to make DDR work. In Sierra Leone, DDR was complicated from the start by a lack of political will from the rebels, leading to luke-warm support for the DDR programme.

2. ***Addressing root causes.*** DDR cannot succeed on its own; it must be part of a wider process of political and economic recovery that addresses the root causes of the conflict. This is likely to include political reform, action to narrow social and economic inequalities, support for the rule of law, and security-sector reform. The last may include building or restructuring a national army and police force, and reforms of key government ministries (especially the Ministries of Defence and Interior).

3. ***Clear leadership*** and ***organisational and technical capacity***. A workable structure and good co-ordination, both national and international, are essential. As a minimum there is likely to be a military commission to oversee and co-ordinate DDR programmes, supported by an expert technical group at the national level to assist and advise. A lead agency should be nominated to co-ordinate the support of the international community.

   Initial efforts at disarmament in Liberia are a good example of how *not* to co-ordinate: in December 2003, riots took place in Monrovia because the UN Mission was not ready to begin the disarmament programme as advertised. Transport to cantonment sites was unavailable, and food and water at the sites were insufficient. After nine people were killed in the riots, the UN-sponsored programme was suspended for two months.

4. ***International support and engagement.*** This means more than funding. It must include timely and sufficient financial and technical support, diplomatic and/or military pressure, provision of neutral military observers, and effective UN resolutions and actions.

   In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) funds have been abundant and timely, but the administration and implementation of DDR programmes has been left largely to often dysfunctional national structures, without adequate international support.

Effective programme design

With this kind of support, DDR has a positive foundation. But programmes require careful design to have a chance of success:

Programme goal defined in terms of the real impact of D, D and R: Traditionally, the success of DDR programmes has been measured crudely by *how many* ex-combatants have benefited, and *how many* guns have been collected, whereas the *quality* of impact must be measured as well. For example, in Sierra Leone, whilst 22,000 combatants disarmed between May and October 2001, most hard-core rebels did not, and many of the weapons handed in were of poor quality. Key quality and quantity indicators should measure the success of reintegration and recovery. Among other things, these should cover employment, access to land, income, permanent housing, and children going to schools.

Including more than just those with guns: In general, the target for disarmament and demobilisation is all active combatants whether they have a gun or not. But others, in particular women and children, must not be overlooked. Programmes need to seek a delicate balance between the high expectations of ex-combatants, the needs of their dependents, and the need to address resentment among the wider population at what may be seen as 'favouritism' towards ex-combatants. In one village where Oxfam is active in Kindu, eastern DRC, a Victims Association has complained that DDR activities 'reward … those who have committed war crimes'. Providing the majority of benefits to communities that host former combatants – instead of directly to the ex-combatants – can avoid a number of common problems.

Careful choice of benefits and incentives: During the disarmament and demobilisation phase, benefits are targeted at the individual – for example, clothes allowances, health programmes in the camps (particularly important for HIV and AIDS, and other sexually-transmitted diseases that are often more prevalent in the military), basic reinsertion packages, and documentation. If cash is given, deciding the amount is very difficult. It should not be more than the market rate for weapons, because that could create a market for new weapons, yet it must be enough to act as a viable incentive. Rebels in Liberia refused to disarm when offered a package of rice and $300. Some donors are now moving away from cash-based systems.

For reintegration, ex-combatants may be offered a choice of employment into the new/restructured national army or police force – after vetting to exclude those involved in the worst human-rights abuses. Alternatively, ex-combatants will be given a package to help them return to civilian life. If employment packages are given, they must be designed around a balance of the ex-combatants' wishes/intentions and an assessment of what the market requires (otherwise trained individuals will not be able to find work, resulting in frustration). In Angola, when the UN's International Organisation of Migration surveyed UNITA ex-combatants, roughly 50 per cent said they wanted to return to their farms, and 50 per cent said they wanted some kind of professional training. At this stage, there will be a mix of benefits to the individual and the community; these include formal education opportunities, vocational training, apprenticeships, training on civil rights and participation, and labour-intensive employment programmes[2].

Educational and vocational training programmes have had mixed success. In El Salvador, only 25 per cent of adults took employment in the area in which they were trained.[3] In eastern DRC, the package to encourage ex-combatants to return to civilian life was more popular than the option to join the military, thereby allowing the government to slim down the armed forces. However, it was more difficult for them to reintegrate into communities precisely because of the 'generosity' of the package that civilians did not receive. As stated above, it may be more successful to focus benefits on the communities of return – whereby the community defines its developmental needs.

Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, in particular women and children. During assembly there should be separate encampment facilities, including medical care, for female ex-combatants. Female staff will be necessary right through the DDR process. Pre-discharge information and further information during the reintegration phase should be tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups. For example, women may need special coaching in their civic rights, access to credit, and access to education and professional training. Reintegration may be particularly challenging for women ex-combatants, who may be ostracised by both family and community.

Reintegration of children should emphasise four distinct components: complete separation from the military, family reunification, psychosocial support, and education or – where relevant – economic opportunity. It will be necessary to respond to the needs of non-combatant wives and children dependent on male combatants.

Clarity of information: All information needs to be transparent, unambiguous, and easily understood by ex-combatants and the wider community. Whilst important in all programmes, it is particularly true in DDR programmes whose purpose is building confidence and security. Unclear messages or false

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[2] For example, road-building and other infrastructure projects which offer employment and allow ex-combatants and civilians to work together in a reconstruction capacity – an excellent vehicle for rebuilding trust and reconciliation. Such projects must have access for women, civilians and ex-combatants, which may be on a fixed quota basis.
[3] Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, World Bank (2002) 'Child Soldiers: Prevention, Demobilization and Reintegration'.

promises can have a very damaging effect. One aid official in Angola noted that 'the government promised heaven and earth to the UNITA ex-combatants, but haven't delivered much of anything'.[4] Rumours (eg: some combatants receiving greater benefits than others) can totally derail the process.

Clarity and transparency is required at every stage of DDR. There must be clarity on the timing of weapons collection, entry into camps, the proposed length of stay in camps (as short as possible), and for how long reintegration benefits will be provided. Some DDR programmes limit the 'R' to *reinsertion* back into civilian life, by providing short-term assistance to cover basic needs. In other contexts the 'R' refers to longer-term *reintegration* projects, though the track record on these is weak. If the former, programme design must ensure links with longer-term programmes, so beneficiaries are not simply left to fend for themselves after an initial disbursement of reintegration kits or money.

A number of **_other factors_** contribute to good DDR programming:

- **Timely intervention.** Where practical, initial DDR planning should start before a peace agreement is signed, to ensure early and sufficient funding from donors, and early and effective recruitment and training of staff. In Liberia, for example, DDR got off to a poor start because agencies scrambled to deploy staff and projects at demobilisation sites at a few days' notice.

- **Removal of small arms and light weapons from civilian, as well as military, hands[5].** Collecting weapons from ex-combatants is not enough. It is imperative to address the large numbers of weapons in civilian hands, as part of the DDR programme (a new approach), or through the development of a medium-long term strategy with all national stakeholders, and/or to ensure complementarity with other programmes designed to improve human security:
  - o Transitional governments should bar private ownership of 'military-style' (and other) weapons, should initially collect and destroy weapons under amnesty, and should re-establish mandatory licensing and data collection for all guns.
  - o In Haiti, Committees for Development and Prevention of Violence have been established in gang-held areas, providing jobs, educational opportunities, and improved living conditions. By proving that the government is able to provide security and opportunities, it is hoped that violent gang members will become isolated and eventually rejected by their communities.

- **Sufficient focus on reintegration.** Agencies often bring different priorities to DDR programming. Peacekeepers often have a disarmament bias and envision DDR as a short-term strategy to neutralise 'spoilers', collect arms and canton ex-combatants; whereas development practitioners advocate a longer-term perspective, expanding the livelihood opportunities of ex-combatants and their dependants, bolstering the absorption capacity of communities of return, promoting reconciliation activities and reconstructing public utilities and services. The longer-term and often more complicated process of reintegration must receive adequate and sustained resources.

3. Conclusion

DDR programmes are vital parts of effective post-conflict recovery, and although it is not an area of major programmatic focus Oxfam will continue to engage with DDR programmes where possible, and where a number of key circumstances exist. To work, DDR programmes need genuine political support from all parties to the conflict, national and international commitment that sees DDR as only one part of effective post-conflict recovery, clear leadership and co-ordination, the capacity to deliver, and international support, engagement, and, where necessary, pressure to succeed. They must have clear aims and objectives, meet the needs of all vulnerable groups, address the need to collect small arms and light weapons from all sources, and have good information-gathering networks.

Useful resources for further reading:
- UN DDR resource center http://www.unddr.org/ which also includes the UN Integrated DDR Standards, launched December 2006
- Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: A practical field and classroom guide, published by GTZ, 2004

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[4] International Crisis Group, interview in Lobito, December 2002.

[5] More information on Oxfam International's position on arms is available at www.oxfaminternational.org and on the web sites of each Oxfam International affiliate. There will also be forthcoming notes in this series on the supply and misuse of arms.