

Forum: The First General Assembly

Issue: Improving international frameworks to manage post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) efforts

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Introduction

Part of the United Nations First General Assembly's role is to deal with the repercussions of conflict. Regional and international conflicts all have protocols on the civilian and military levels associated with them that aim to reduce the long-term impacts on civilians and mitigate future crises. This includes disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. All these are important to prevent non-state actors or coup-de-ta-formed administrations from using past conflicts to consolidate military power. Examples of inadequate frameworks and their consequences include the Taliban's consolidation of power and toppling of the Afghani government after lacking military disarmament from the Soviet and American pullouts, as well as the abandonment of influential military figures.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is essentially a component of the United Nations approach to the enforcement of a peace continuum in relevant regions, and the transition from conflict resolution and prevention to peacebuilding and socioeconomic development for recovery. Practical application of DDR principles is achieved via partnerships with member states in both mission and non-mission settings.

Violent conflicts do not always completely cease when a political settlement is reached or a peace agreement is signed. There remains a real danger that violence will flare up again during the immediate post-conflict period, because putting right the political, security, social and economic problems and other root causes of war is a long-term project. Furthermore, peace operations are often mandated in contexts where an agreement is yet to be reached or where a peace process is yet to be initiated or is only partially initiated. In non-mission contexts, requests from the Government for the UN to support DDR are made either when ceasefires are reached or when a peace agreement or a comprehensive peace agreement is signed.

DDR is an imperative step in modern conflict handling and mitigation. Its importance was made abundantly clear after the failure of phase one UNISOM (UN mission in Somalia). There, after the falling of the first battalion of Al Shabaab, little DDR efforts were made, causing a the resurgence of the group in Somaliland, complete with weapons, new recruits, and disgruntled veterans of the first phase of conflict. It highlighted that it is imperative that power vacuums left behind post-conflict do not get filled up by the desolate civilians living there, and that a return to normal social organisation is necessary for the region to thrive once again.

Definition of Key Terms

Disarmament

Disarmament and arms control have played an intrinsic role in easing international tensions and maintaining peace and security, and the UN's advocacy for disarmament has been constant throughout its history as fulfilling its role as a peacekeeping entity. This involves the collection, documentation, control, and disposal of weapons and ammunition from former combatants and the return/documentation of military equipment left behind by foreign sovereign actors. Examples of disarmament include the TFG (Transitional Federal Government), a transitional government in Somalia's efforts to document the military and weapons confiscated from the first Somali Civil War. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

Demobilisation

Demobilisation is essential for damage control after any conflict. It is the discharge of military and combatant units from active duty, and efforts of their transition back to civilian life. Most nations are already plagued with the issue of veteran reintegration in society, but with the issue of non-state combatants captured after civil wars, and the lack of resources to adequately provide incarceration and rehabilitation, the UN's goals are to allow for re-education and vocational training to allow for a successful transition from combatant to civilian life, and ideally prevent the possibility of their recruitment.

Reintegration

The step following demobilization is reintegration efforts. All reintegration attempts generally need to fulfil 3 basic criteria: economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being. This includes vocational training, support during unemployment periods, organizational/state support for re-employment and most importantly, physical and psychological care providence. Most UN missions, such as UNMISS and UNMIL have reintegration wings, responsible for reintegration efforts, and directing of foreign aid to relevant on-ground issues.

Reinsertion

Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs and can last up to one year.

UN Peacekeeping

UN Peacekeeping helps countries navigate from conflict to peace. They have unique strengths, including international legitimacy (legal recognition and protections), burden sharing (the ability to assist states in aid), and an ability to deploy troops and police from around the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to address a range of mandates set by the UN Security Council and General Assembly. Peacekeeping usually comes in the form of sanctioned 'missions'. UNMISS, UNMIL, and UNMIK are all examples of the UN sending peacekeeping forces in South Sudan, Lebanon and Kuwait.

D.D.R Preconditions

For DDR efforts to be made in any nation, there must be certain criteria that are fulfilled. This is why DDR-providing bodies decide whether DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and/or reintegration support constitute the most appropriate response to a situation.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views:

African Union:

The African Union (AU) gained observer status in the IAWG(Inter-Agency Working Group) -DDR in 2018 and has significantly contributed to the revision of the IDDRS. Considering the density of DDR efforts in the continent, the AU has the AU DDR Capacity Programme under which DDR collaborations are handled. The objective of this partnership is to strengthen the strategic and operational capacities of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in designing and implementing DDR processes. DDR processes are significant for the attainment of peace, security and stability in Africa. In light of this, the AU is working to consolidate the capacity of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to provide support for DDR efforts in Africa.

United Nations Department on Peace Operations (UNDPO):

The UNDPO serves as the primary coordinator of DDR efforts globally, managing over 60% of active DDR programs worldwide through its specialized DDR Section. Since its establishment in 2007, the DDR Section has developed and maintained the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), which serve as the comprehensive international framework for DDR implementation. Their approach emphasizes local ownership, gender sensitivity, and sustainable reintegration strategies. The UNDPO's work has been particularly impactful in post-conflict zones, where they've established innovative programming such as the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) initiatives. Between 2000-2023, they've overseen successful DDR programs in Sierra Leone (where 72,490 combatants were demobilized), Liberia (103,019 participants processed), and Côte d'Ivoire (69,506 former combatants reintegrated). Their technical expertise has proven crucial in developing context-specific approaches, with field offices maintaining an average of 150 DDR specialists across active missions.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC):

The DRC hosts one of the largest and most complex DDR programs globally, operating through the National DDR Commission (CONADER) since 2004. Their program has demobilized over

100,000 combatants across multiple phases, though reintegration success rates hover around 40%. The DRC's experience highlights both the challenges and opportunities in implementing DDR in highly complex conflict environments.

CONADER's operations span all 26 provinces, with particular focus on the eastern regions where conflict has been most intense. Their third-generation DDR program (DDR-III), launched in 2015 with World Bank support, introduced innovative approaches including community-based reintegration and specialized programs for female ex-combatants. Between 2015-2023, they've processed 27,000 former fighters, providing vocational training in 15 different sectors and establishing 89 community integration projects around the nation.

Colombia:

Colombia represents one of the most comprehensive national approaches to DDR globally, following the historic 2016 peace agreement with FARC. Their Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) has processed over 73,000 former combatants since 2003, achieving a remarkable 76% success rate in long-term reintegration. Their model emphasizes a holistic approach, combining educational opportunities, psychological support, and economic reintegration.

The Colombian approach is distinguished by its "territorial peace" concept, which focuses on addressing local dynamics and community needs. Since 2016, they've established 24 Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (ETCRs), providing comprehensive support to 13,589 former FARC members. Their innovative "collective reincorporation" strategy has supported the creation of 147 productive projects, benefiting over 3,500 ex-combatants and their families.

The ARN's success is built on strong institutional frameworks and sustainable funding mechanisms. They maintain a network of 35 regional offices staffed by over 800 professionals, including psychologists, social workers, and economic advisors. Their annual budget of \$150 million is supplemented by international cooperation funds, enabling them to provide comprehensive support packages including housing subsidies, healthcare coverage, and educational grants. The program has achieved notable outcomes, with 85% of participants completing basic education and 62% securing formal employment or establishing successful businesses.

Integrated DDR training group (IDDRTG):

The IDDRTG is an international network of 18 training and research organizations. The IDDRTG serves as a forum where DDR training practitioners and researchers come together to share knowledge and best practices in the field of DDR. The group encourages its members to coordinate and, where appropriate, jointly deliver training courses in order to meet the needs of DDR practitioners, planners and policymakers. The IDDRTG often collaborates on the design and implementation of DDR training with the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR.

Local DDR Process Stakeholders

National actors include male and female adults, youth and children (including those associated with armed forces and groups). Receiving communities, which may include those accepting returning internally displaced persons and refugees, are also central stakeholders. Other national actors who shape DDR processes include armed forces and groups, among them the military and militia and self-protection groups; the police; national and/or transitional Governments, political parties and leaders; provincial and local authorities; civil society actors, including women's leaders and associations and youth groups; the private sector; and the media. The third group that influences DDR includes international actors such as the UN system, bilateral and multilateral donors, and regional and other international organizations. The efforts of all these stakeholders should be coordinated to ensure that they work towards a common (shared) vision of peace and security and channel their resources towards a common goal.

At any time, a stakeholder may constitute a participant or beneficiary in DDR processes. Participants are all persons who receive direct assistance through the DDR process, including ex-combatants, persons associated with armed forces and groups, and others identified during negotiations of the political framework and planning for a UN-supported DDR process. Beneficiaries are individuals and groups who receive indirect benefits through a UN-supported DDR process. These include but are not limited to communities in which DDR process participants resettle, and businesses where ex-combatants work as part of the DDR programme. Participants and beneficiaries may be national/local, regional or international. For example, members of beneficiary communities may be national or transnational by virtue of being located in zones spanning multiple recognized borders by virtue of being migratory

Development of Issue/Timeline:

Event / Treaty	Topic / Event	Action / Outcome
<p>The MINUSCA family of UNSC Resolutions</p>	<p>The peacekeeping mission aimed to ensure peace in the Central African region, transitioning from MISCA, following the The Séléka militia rebellion.</p>	<p>Working with the African Armed Forces to engage in fair border management to ensure reintegration and repatriation. Greenlighting disarmament protocol action and demobilisation organisation.</p>
<p>The UNMIL family of UNSC Resolutions (S/2003/875 +)</p>	<p>The UNMIL peacekeeping mission in Lebanon supported the efforts of the Lebanese government following the involvement of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States)</p>	<p>Support the National Transitional Government of Liberia in the timely implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; to monitor adherence to the ceasefire agreement, to assist the National Transitional Government in extending State authority throughout Liberia; to provide security at key government installations; to ensure the security and freedom of movement of UN personnel; to facilitate the free movement of people, and humanitarian assistance; to support the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced person</p>

<p>The Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols</p>	<p>The Geneva conventions mainly outline the rules of warfare, however they place restrictions and define protocol regarding the aftermath of wars and rules that state and non-state actors must follow.</p>	<p>Art, 3, 5 disallow the recruitment of children in war, and mandate the reintegration of child soldiers back into society. Article 26 in the multiple ICJ opinion pieces have implied that civilian infrastructure used for military purposes must be reinstated post-conflict. Article 19 allows for repatriation of prisoners of war, and article 16 prohibits prisoners of war and post conflict combatants from forming armed forces, compelling states to prioritise their reintegration in society.</p>
<p>UNMIK family of UNSC Resolutions</p>	<p>The UNMIK resolution laid the foundation for modern UN peacekeeping and how humanitarian missions are structured. It is on of the few missions where no major assisting diplomatic body related to the conflict was involved</p>	<p>Reaffirmed the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety, created a governing body to distribute donated funds, assigned civil and military presence in the region, Verified the withdrawal and deconstruction of the military presence according to a defined timetable. Commanded: Marking/clearing minefields; Maintaining a presence at Serb patrimonial sites; Maintaining a presence at key border crossings.</p>

<p>UNSCR 2217</p>	<p>Séléka Rebellion in the Central African Republic resulting in variations and structural integrity change to the political landscape of the CAR and region as a whole to address post-conflict challenges</p>	<p>Extended the mandate of the MINUSCA mission to address post-conflict challenges in the Central African Republic, focusing on enhancing local governance and civilian protection. Oversaw the disarmament of armed groups through voluntary weapons surrender programs, offering financial incentives and skill-training workshops for participants. Strengthened the political transition process by supporting free and fair elections, organizing public awareness campaigns to encourage voter participation, and ensuring the safety of polling stations. psychological support services for former combatants to address trauma and facilitate reintegration. Enhanced protection of civilians by deploying rapid-response peacekeeping units in violence-prone areas and establishing early warning systems to mitigate potential conflicts.</p>
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Previous Attempts to solve the issue:

Pre DDR protocol:

A local-level transitional stabilization measure designed for those who are eligible for a national DDR programme Activities include (but are not limited to) WAM, gender-responsive and age-appropriate vocational training, setting up small businesses, and cash for work. Conducted with male and female ex-combatants who are in camps, or with ex-combatant who are already in communities. The preconditions for such aid are mainly the delays in implementing a national DDR plan. These delays may have arisen from a deterioration of trust, security, and political will

(i.e., absence of preconditions for a DDR programme). Funding delays and capacity deficits (i.e., preconditions for a DDR programme are present).

Community Violence Reduction

A bottom-up approach that targets children and youth at risk of recruitment, community members and armed groups, helps eliminate the main drivers of violence and build social cohesion. Presents an opportunity to rebalance unequal gender relations at the community level. Encompasses a range of activities from labour-intensive projects, business incubation and community dialogue forums, directly engaging with former members of armed forces and groups and children and youth at risk to prevent further recruitment. These efforts are standard in DDR missions and are used before, after and alongside various DDR programmes. For example, to reduce tensions in communities where cantonment is occurring or ex-combatants are returning. Can be used as an alternative to a DDR programme when the preconditions are not in place. Suited for situations with widely diffused and localized violence by different non-state actors (e.g., armed gangs in urban environments, localized inter-communal conflict, non-signatory armed groups).

Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management

Include (but is not limited to) weapons collection in exchange for community development projects; support for safer management of weapons and ammunition by communities; the creation of gun-free zones; awareness-raising activities regarding the risks associated with weapons possession; and support for the development of WAM capacity of armed forces and groups. Enables the determination of priorities based on local participatory processes involving men and women. Transfers the responsibility for weapons reduction or management to communities. These are used before, after and alongside DDR programmes, but particularly when the preconditions for disarmament are not in place. Suited for situations where there are diverse arms-holders or arms proliferation throughout the civilian population (e.g., irregular armed groups).

DDR Mediation Support

As members of mediation support teams or mission staff in an advisory role to the SRSG or DSRSR, DDR practitioners can provide insights into the interests and positions of armed forces and groups related to DDR. DDR practitioners draft DDR provisions of ceasefires and political agreements and make proposals on the design and implementation of DDR programmes. DDR practitioners provide advice on how to engage with armed forces and groups on DDR issues and contribute to the attainment of agreements. Such mediation efforts are made when working towards the preconditions for DDR programmes (i.e., when peace negotiations are ongoing). When non-signatory armed groups are present in settings where other groups are participating in a DDR programme. When armed groups lose trust in a peace agreement or renege on the terms related .

DDR Support to Transitional Security Arrangements

Geared towards security-related confidence-building measures as part of ongoing negotiations, ceasefire or peace agreements. The agreements can include the temporary establishment of legitimate nonstate security providers or mixed patrols and units consisting of state and non-state actors at the national, regional or local levels. Often designed to facilitate the integration of ex-combatants into the national security sector in line with a relevant conflict resolution framework. Like Mediation support, such action is taken when working towards the preconditions for a DDR programme (i.e., when peace negotiations are ongoing), when armed groups lose trust in a peace agreement.

Formation of the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR (IAWG):

The UN took a significant step in coordinating DDR efforts by establishing the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on DDR in 2005. This initiative brought together 22 UN entities and international organizations to develop integrated approaches to DDR programming. The IAWG created the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), which became the cornerstone of modern DDR implementation. Between 2005-2010, the IAWG oversaw programs in 19 countries, processing over 400,000 ex-combatants and collecting approximately 200,000 weapons.

However, early implementation revealed significant challenges. While the standardization was praised, the rigid framework sometimes struggled to adapt to local contexts. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2008), the standardized approach failed to account for complex

local power dynamics, leading to a 40% return-to-arms rate among processed combatants. The IAWG responded by introducing more flexible guidelines in 2014, allowing for greater adaptation to local conditions.

UN Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP):

The World Bank and UN jointly implemented the MDRP as the largest DDR initiative ever undertaken, covering seven countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa. With a budget of \$500 million, the program aimed to coordinate DDR efforts across national boundaries. The MDRP processed approximately 279,263 ex-combatants and supported 244,476 beneficiaries through reintegration programs. The program demonstrated particular success in Rwanda, where 88% of participants achieved sustainable livelihoods within three years.

Despite these achievements, the MDRP faced significant challenges in cross-border coordination. The program struggled particularly in the border regions between the DRC and Uganda, where lack of synchronized implementation led to gaps exploited by armed groups. These lessons led to the development of regional coordination mechanisms in subsequent programs.

UN Integrated DDR Standards Implementation (2006-2016):

The UN's implementation of the IDDRS represented a major shift toward standardized DDR approaches. The standards were first tested comprehensively in Côte d'Ivoire (2007-2012), where they guided the processing of 69,506 former combatants. The program achieved a 71% successful reintegration rate, significantly higher than previous efforts. The standards emphasized gender-sensitive approaches, leading to specialized programs for female ex-combatants, which showed particular success in Liberia where women's participation in DDR programs increased from 17% to 38%.

However, implementation in Afghanistan (2003-2005) highlighted limitations in the standards' application to ongoing conflicts. The Afghan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) struggled to maintain standardized procedures in active conflict zones, achieving only partial success with 63,380 of targeted 100,000 ex-combatants processed.

Security Council Resolution 2151:

This landmark resolution marked the first standalone resolution on Security Sector Reform (SSR) and its connection to DDR. The resolution emphasized the need for national ownership of DDR processes and established new funding mechanisms through the Peacebuilding Fund. Implementation in the Central African Republic (2015-2020) demonstrated both the potential and limitations of this approach. While national ownership increased, with local authorities managing 60% of program components, funding gaps remained a significant challenge.

The resolution's implementation in Mali (2013-2018) through MINUSMA showed more promising results, processing 12,000 combatants under locally-managed programs. However, the sustainability of these programs remained challenged by limited national capacity and resource constraints.

Possible Solutions:

Improvement on previous DDR protocols:

Possible Solutions to solve the issue lie in the optimisation of the current DDR protocol. The current frameworks are essentially a series of past actions and obligations derived from the Geneva Convention and treaties like CEDAW and Convention on Rights of Children. DDR needs its own comprehensive legislation and treaty. Such treaties need to fulfill 2 simple criteria: To apply to the actions of non-state actors, and to not overreach on the sovereignty of other nations.

A comprehensive treaty on DDR may be able to recognise the parties likely to engage with post conflict armament collection, and formalise the protocol employed to reintegrate such arms into the recognised state's military, or confirm the destruction arms.

Multi-Phase Community Integration Centers (MPCICs):

This solution proposes establishing specialized integration facilities that operate in three distinct phases over an 18-month period. Phase 1 (3 months) would focus on initial stabilization, where ex-combatants receive intensive psychological support while remaining in close contact with

their families, unlike traditional DDR camps that often isolate participants. Phase 2 (6 months) would introduce vocational training alongside community members, with a 50-50 split between ex-combatants and local civilians in all programs. Phase 3 (9 months) would focus on graduated integration, where participants slowly transition to full community living while maintaining access to support services.

The centers would feature innovative "community councils" composed of local leaders, ex-combatants, and development experts who jointly manage programming. Each MPCIC would require approximately \$2.5 million in initial setup costs and \$1.8 million annual operating budget. Pilot programs could be implemented in three locations: northern Mozambique, eastern DRC, and central Mali. Success metrics would include both individual reintegration rates and community cohesion indicators measured through standardized assessment tools.

Community-Based Reintegration Model:

To address the social barriers faced by ex-combatants, a community-based reintegration model could be implemented, to focus on joint development projects benefiting both former fighters and their receiving communities. This approach would allocate 60% of program resources to community infrastructure development while 40% supports individual reintegration needs. Projects would be selected through participatory planning processes involving community leaders, local government officials, and ex-combatant representatives. The model would include establishing community reconciliation committees that oversee project implementation and mediate potential conflicts. Implementation costs would be shared between national governments and international donors, with clear benchmarks for community acceptance and social cohesion. This is vital in addressing the social and personal impact DDR can have.

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Appendix

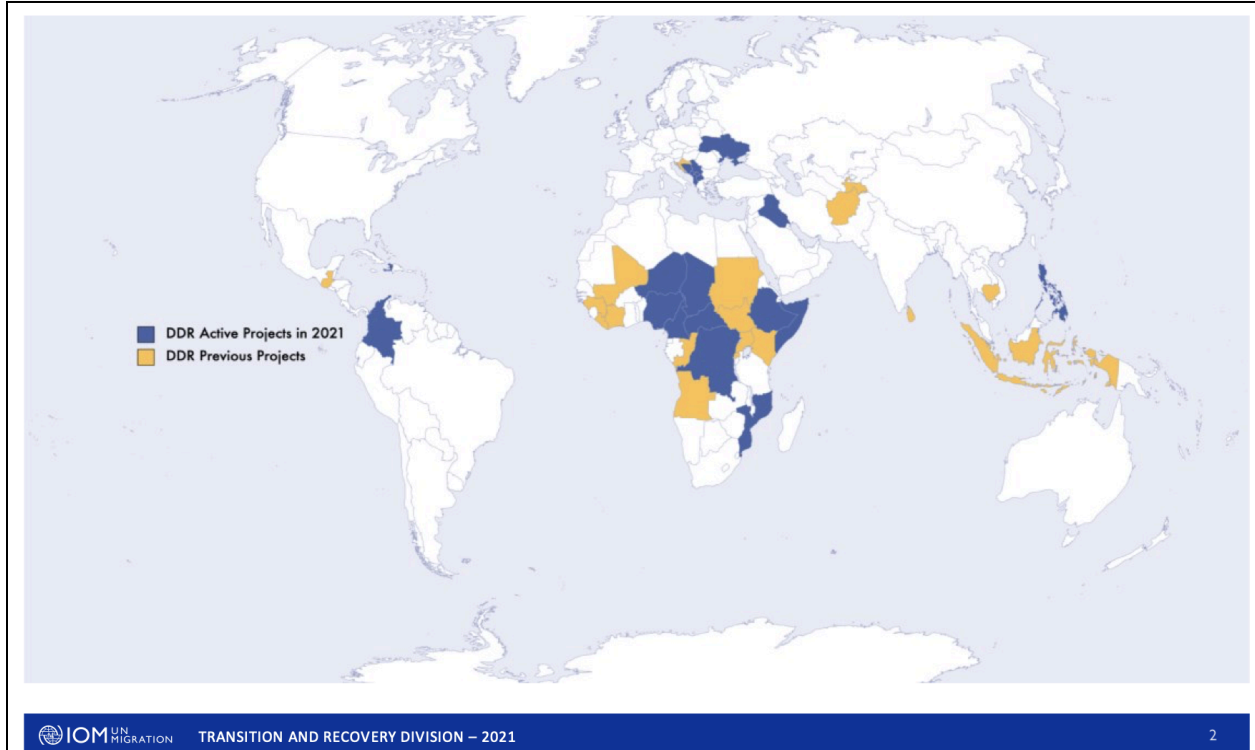


Figure 1: Visual representation of the presence of active DDR projects in 2021 as compared to the location of previous DDR projects. Representing a mass influx within the Central African region.