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*Best Practices for Successful Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)*

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## Best Practices for Successful Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

This paper identifies and discusses "best practices" for successful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants in intrastate military conflicts and civil wars, which is a vital component of achieving peace among warring factions.  By extracting and examining lessons learned from United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations over the past decade where DDR has been successfully employed, a clear set of best practices with respect to each component of DDR emerges.

Combatants engaging in such intrastate conflicts have become physically and psychologically removed from civil society due to their participation in war.  When a ceasefire is finally reached, the former combatants must return to the civil life from which they came.  Given the special needs of former combatants, implementation of the DDR component of the peace plan must occur if a sustainable, peaceful outcome is to be obtained.  As discussed in this paper, DDR best practices must be implemented to prevent the occurrence of circumstances in which former combatants find it easy to recommence war, further destroying the social fabric and often any economic progress that their countries had obtained prior to the armed conflict.

### Introduction

For the past decade, UN peacekeeping operations have been undertaken in countries torn apart by intrastate armed conflict and civil war.  The experience of implementing peacekeeping operations in certain conflicts shows that early and thorough consideration of a DDR plan is most likely to lead to sustainable peace.  In countries rife with small arms and light, movable weapons, sustainable peace has been difficult to establish since the high arms levels cause instability even after a peace agreement has been negotiated.  Therefore, DDR must be considered as soon as the peace-brokering process commences.  Once a peace agreement

containing a plan for DDR has been reached, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration may begin.

Peace Brokering. Few would disagree that peace treaties are helpful and often necessary for ending intrastate armed hostilities. Peace treaties, however, are merely a solid start. Within the peace treaty framework, there must be an agreed-upon plan to accomplish disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Otherwise, the risk that rebels will resume hostilities remains. Thus implementation of best practices in the peace-brokering stage, with due consideration of future DDR efforts, is the first step in creating sustainable peace. Any peace agreement must therefore provide the specific details of the DDR process from the outset. Once a DDR plan is laid out, parties to the conflict must not only agree to a ceasefire, but must also commit to uphold the terms of the peace treaty. Furthermore, the international community must support the peace agreement in a coordinated approach, which may include providing political, military, and financial assistance to the DDR program.

Disarmament. Once a peace agreement containing a DDR component has been entered into, implementation of best practices is necessary to ensure the success of the ceasefire and prevent the parties from taking up arms again. These practices include full consideration of: (1) the timing for weapons collection and disposal and locations of cantonment sites; (2) development of a regional approach to disarmament; (3) implementation of an efficient arms management policy for weapons collection and destruction; and (4) implementation of gun "buy-back" and "weapons for development" programs to achieve complete disarmament, since reducing arms levels is a prerequisite for attaining peace and stability in fragile states.

Demobilization. Once disarmament is accomplished, implementation of best practices in the demobilization of parties to intrastate conflicts is instrumental in limiting opportunities for

destructive groupthink and potential remilitarization. The peacekeepers must provide a strong public information program to educate former combatants on the benefits of peace. Furthermore, peacekeepers should conduct mandatory orientation programs to assist the former combatants in their transition back into civilian life. Finally, peacekeepers should target programs towards ex-combatants in order to address their immediate and long-term socioeconomic needs.

Reintegration. Implementation of best practices related to reintegration assists peacekeepers in helping former combatants return to civil society as non-combatants, thereby sustaining a lasting peace. First and foremost, peacekeepers must assist states in developing programs that extend beyond the short-term objectives of disarmament and demilitarization, and embrace long-term goals of peace and stability. Countries emerging from such internal conflicts must also implement economic reintegration projects to foster national reconciliation and rekindle economic progress that existed before armed hostilities began. Finally, reintegration must address the needs of vulnerable groups such as female and child soldiers, the disabled and chronically ill, and the dependents of combatants whose well-being might have depended on a militia salary.

**Discussion**

According to Nat Coletta, the DDR process is "a precondition for reviving civil society, reducing poverty and sustaining development in countries emerging from war that requires the demobilization of forces and the subsequent reintegration of ex-combatants into productive civilian lives."[1] Peacekeepers engaged in peace-brokering between parties to intrastate conflicts must recognize the importance of a meaningful DDR component as part of any peace agreement. Accordingly, consideration of DDR best practices should be part of any discussions or negotiations concerning peace. The DDR of ex-combatants is part of the entire peace process

and requires a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to its implementation. DDR is therefore essential for sustainable peace and development to occur in countries emerging from conflict. In the aftermath of conflict, the consolidation of peace requires a focus on both short-term emergency stabilization measures and the achievement of sustainable peace over the long-term, through a peace agreement which effectively addresses DDR.

### *Best Practices for a DDR-based Peace-Brokering Process*

**Lesson #1: A Peace Agreement Must Provide the Details of the DDR Process from the Outset.**

Peace treaties often bring a necessary end to intrastate hostilities. Within the peace treaty framework, however, there must be a plan to accomplish disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Otherwise there is a risk that rebels may disregard the agreement and resume hostilities. Accordingly, the experience of past UN peacekeeping operations indicates that the first step to implementing a successful demilitarization program is to develop a comprehensive DDR plan within the peace agreement. Such a plan would call for a timetable for: the ceasefire to come into effect; flexible target dates marking both the beginning and end of the disarmament and demobilization phases; the early collection of weapons and ammunition; a sufficient number of cantonment sites; the building of solid institutions to implement the DDR program; and security sector reform.[2] "[W]hen a country is moving from war to peace, demobilization and reintegration issues should be addressed at the earliest stages of the peace negotiation process."[3]

In Sierra Leone, civil war was initiated by Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) against the government of President Ahmad Kabbah, which had come to power in 1991 through a military coup by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) headed by Major Johnny Paul Koroma.[4] After the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) ousted this military regime and reinstated President Kabbah, the Government

of Sierra Leone established the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration to manage a program to demobilize AFRC combatants who surrendered to ECOMOG.[5] The UN Military Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) was deployed to assist in the disarmament process. Unfortunately, this phase of DDR was short-lived because DDR provisions of the Conakry treaty, the controlling peace agreement, were never implemented and hostilities resumed.[6] Similarly, the Lomé Peace Agreement signed in 1999 between the Government of Sierra Leone and combatants of the RUF failed because disarmament and demobilization issues were treated in a cursory manner, and neglected until very late in the negotiation process.[7]

In Guatemala, however, this was not the case. In 1983, after enduring 30 years of civil war inflicted by Carlos Castillo Armas' dictatorship, which employed brutality and torture by the guerilla forces of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the Government of Guatemala along with the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua requested assistance from the UN. They implemented the "Procedure for the Establishment of a Firm Lasting Peace in Central America," a collective peace agreement also known as the Guatemala Procedure to end a cycle of violence that had engulfed Central America for many years.[8] During the UN Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) mission in Guatemala in 1989, the UN was able to launch one of its most successful interventions to establish a secure and stable environment. In the case of the Guatemalan conflict, DDR was from the outset a primary element of the Guatemala Procedure peace negotiation process.[9]

Thus, it is shown that the early consideration and implementation of a DDR plan in a peace agreement reduces the risk that warring parties will resume fighting and increases the likelihood that they will maintain an agreed-upon ceasefire.

**Lesson #2:   Warring Parties Must Commit to Uphold the Terms of the Peace Treaty**

In order to build mutual confidence and trust, the parties must assume national ownership of the DDR process and have a strong political will to abide by DDR terms in the peace agreement.  The most successful DDR programs were those in which all parties to the conflict demonstrated a desire to respect the terms of the ceasefire and the peace agreement.

After the previous failure of DDR in 1998 between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF, the country's rebels developed a "distaste" for disarmament and resumed hostilities.[10] Resentful that ECOMOG had ousted their leader, RUF combatants no longer trusted ECOMOG to act as a neutral force.[11]  Therefore, in 2002, the international community established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to implement the Lomé Peace Agreement and encourage disarmament and demobilization in Sierra Leone by providing security and discouraging a resumption of hostilities in the region.[12]  By January 2002, after disarming and demobilizing 72, 500 combatants, and destroying 42,500 weapons, UNAMSIL helped Sierra Leone achieve successful disarmament and demobilization.[13]

By 2002, the main reason DDR became successful in the country was due to the parties' political will to see demilitarization succeed.[14]  Prior to 2002, when there was an absence of political will and determination, the DDR process stalled and hostilities resumed, as evidenced by the successive peace agreements and the two UN missions UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL that were deployed within a two-year time frame to implement an effective DDR plan.[15]  Ultimately, as required by the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, the Sierra Leonean parties committed to disarm and demobilize with a clear understanding of their roles, their responsibilities, and the objectives to be achieved during the reconstruction process.[16]

**Lesson #3:   The International Community Must Support the Peace Agreement in a Coordinated Approach to Meet the Political, Military, and Financial Needs of the DDR Program.**

Experience indicates that the international community must support the DDR plan and the peace agreement in a coordinated approach early in the negotiation process to fully assess the political, military, humanitarian, and financial requirements of an effective DDR peacekeeping mission.[17]  Successful implementation of demilitarization programs requires communication amongst the UN, international donor, host government, and the humanitarian non-governmental organization (NGO) community in order to devise an "integrated technical mission" that effectively pools resources.[18]

Militarily, the international community must ensure that it employs a sufficient amount of peacekeepers to make the DDR process credible in terms of security.[19]  Financially, the international community must make a long-term commitment to post-conflict economic reconstruction and development to rebuild the economies of war-torn states.  Adequate funding for reintegration programs is therefore vital and must be planned for, and secured, early in the peace agreement to avoid delays in implementation, since the international community may be compelled to provide financial assistance grants and loans to fragile states.[20]  Essentially, in peacekeeping missions where demilitarization has succeeded, the international community did not permit institutional biases to deter it from effectively collaborating with other international donors and agencies during the demilitarization process.  Rather, the international community played an integral role in long-term reintegration projects by developing "effective coordination and unity of command" to manage the DDR process.[21]

In 1991, during the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the international community was vital in providing the political clout to promote human rights in the country, the financial support necessary to encourage monetary contributions from international donors, and the military muscle to simultaneously provide security for elections and end a 12

year civil war between the Government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Marti Liberation Movement (FLMN).[22] Five Central American countries, having signed the "Guatemala Procedure", the Government of El Salvador and the FLMN entered negotiations to end the civil war that had plagued their country.

### *Disarmament Best Practices*

Experience has shown that sustainable peace requires an effective disarmament program that will maintain stability in the short-term and consolidate peace in the long-term. Disarmament refers to the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons of combatants.[23] It also involves the reduction of arms flows, civilian disarmament, the development of a responsible arms management program, and land-mine removal.[24] In addition, successful disarmament programs implement a realistic, broad, and flexible timetable to allow for delays in the completion of the disarmament process and institute gradual confidence-building.[25]

**Lesson #1: Consider the Procedures, Timing for Weapons Collection and Disposal, and Location of Cantonment Sites**

Effective disarmament occurred in cases where government forces, opposition groups, irregular armed militias, armed individuals, and foreign forces were disarmed immediately upon their arrival at designated assembly areas in order to avoid a relapse into war. After having surrendered their weapons and ammunition in a "phased process" at cantonment sites, the fighters are officially considered disarmed ex-combatants and receive an identification card alerting others of their disarmament/civilian status.[26] While at the cantonment sites, the former combatants pledge to refrain from participating in future military activity and are warned that returning to violence constitutes a criminal offense that will be prosecuted.

During the disarmament phase, it is also essential to construct cantonment sites in both rural and urban areas that are accessible to the armed public and facilitate the safe and secure storage of weapons pending destruction.[27]  Under this procedure, former combatants can walk to cantonment sites located near their bases, take transportation offered by the international and regional peacekeeping forces, or be disarmed near residential neighborhoods, barracks, or camps where they live, train, or work.[28]  These assembly areas must be located in secure environments to encourage complete disarmament.

Nearly two years after Mozambique obtained its independence from Portugal in 1975, civil war broke out in the country between the government-led Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO).[29]  After the deaths of more than one million Mozambicans and the displacement of millions more, both parties, weary from war, emerged eager to resolve their differences and held peace negotiations in 1990.

By October 1992, the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), was able to effectively disarm the two combative forces in accordance with the General Peace Agreement by collecting and destroying weapons and disbanding irregular armed forces in order to put an end to civil war, permit the resettlement of former combatants into civil society, and conduct peaceful elections in 1994.[30]

**Lesson #2:   Develop a Regional Approach to Achieve Disarmament**

Even in intrastate conflicts, devising regional strategies to address post-conflict management issues across state-boundaries fosters a strong and peaceful environment for tackling post-conflict disarmament problems.[31]  Chris Alden (1997) and Mason, Douglas, and Fraser (1997) assert that demilitarization knows no boundaries and recommend developing a regional approach to disarmament.

Developing a "cross-border peacekeeping" approach to disarmament also provides a better chance of minimizing post-conflict problems rather than treating each conflict as a discrete, state-based phenomenon since confidence and capacity building measures are just as important within states as they are between states.[32] By employing a regional approach in southern Africa, the UN has been able to focus on confidence-building and transparency measures in a region where there is a history of regional conflict and violence.

The creation of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a multilateral armed force, represents an attempt amongst West African states to establish regional security.[33] ECOMOG demonstrated its ability to establish regional stability when it intervened in the civil war in Liberia (1989 – 1996) and negotiated the Cotonou Agreement to create a "lasting peace" in Liberia and prevent conflict from spreading throughout West Africa.[34] By encouraging African heads of state to dialogue amongst themselves and develop organizations such as the ECOMOG, African leaders have inspired external support from the international community, have built confidence in resolving regional conflict, and have taken an ambitious step towards achieving viable peace.

Well-executed national disarmament efforts have proven futile when no attention is paid to cross-border arms flows.[35] It is almost impossible, however, for a state, acting on its own, to successfully control the flow of weapons into its territory due to an abundance of small arms and light weapons on the international black market at affordable prices and permeable borders that easily permit the smuggling of small weapons and ammunition across state lines.[36] A regional approach is therefore crucial to the prevention of illegal arms trafficking.

History has shown that regional approaches offer the most opportunity for progress in addressing the problem of light weapons proliferation and cross-border arms transfers.[37]

Severing supply routes for illegal arms trade is essential to disarmament because the failure to stop the flow of weapons into a volatile conflict area may fuel continued fighting and undermine all efforts to secure peace.[38]  Regional operations employed by regional forces such as the African Union (AU) gives peacekeeping forces greater capacity and flexibility to sever smuggling and gunrunning across state lines by permitting the forces of one country to quickly and effectively come to the aid of forces in another country.[39]  Therefore, successful disarmament occurs when collective regional security is combined with the strong political will and commitment of governments who are willing to change policies regarding their borders.

History also suggests that an arms embargo initiated by the UN Security Council is the best collective security mechanism to solve this issue because it ensures a formal commitment of neighboring countries and key arms suppliers not to transfer arms into the conflict area, encourages countries to actively enforce the embargo in their respective territories, and requires them to incorporate the embargo into their national laws.[40]  In 1977, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo against South Africa because the South African Defense Force (SADF) and other supporters of the apartheid regime used weapons to facilitate racial oppression against the country's black majority.  It was not until 1998 that the United States lifted its 35 year arms embargo against South Africa.

**Lesson #3:  Implement An Efficient Arms Management Policy for Weapons Collection and Destruction.**

A secure environment should be established at disarmament sites for disarmed ex-combatants to build confidence in the DDR program and encourage complete disarmament.[41]  If the arms storage facilities are not secure, the collected arms could easily be stolen, lead to the rearmament of former warring parties, facilitate the export of arms to other conflict areas, and ultimately undermine the peace process by increasing violence and crime.[42]

Colletta, Kostner, and Wiederhofer (2004), and Mason, Douglas, and Fraser (1997) maintain that successful disarmament occurs when all parties to the conflict commit and adhere to a responsible arms management policy in which collected weapons are securely stored or destroyed at disarmament sites. Experience indicates that secure disarmament sites allow former combatants to gain confidence in the DDR program and encourage them to completely disarm. Otherwise, the improper management of weapons collected during the disarmament phase may create security risks and escalate conflict.

During the Lomé peace process in Sierra Leone in May 2000, for example, UNAMSIL was unable to disarm Sierra Leonean ex-combatants since stolen weapons led to the collapse of the peace process.[43] In addition, when a country's national security forces are unable or unwilling to provide minimum security for the general public, and when demobilized ex-combatants of opposition forces are trying to reintegrate into the community, an armed international/regional military force must be given the responsibility of securing collected weapons, the assembly areas, and the ex-combatants until their final discharge at the end of the demobilization process.

Once the weapons and ammunition have been collected, there are two options available for their disposal: the weapons can either be kept in an interim secure storage facility protected by the international or regional peacekeeping force responsible for the security of the weapons, or they can be immediately destroyed by the explosive ordnance unit of a peacekeeping force.[44] Experience has shown that it is better to destroy the weapons *in situ* (on site). Otherwise, delays in the destruction of confiscated weapons will allow weapons to be recaptured and recycled.[45] The immediate destruction of weapons also avoids problems that arise regarding the safe transportation and storage of weapons and is a cheap and simple method of disposal.[46]

Furthermore, it has been noted that weapons destruction in a public ceremony such as a bonfire, may have both political and psychological benefits.[47] Experience demonstrates that bonfires have been used successfully to instill a sense of commitment to reducing violence, and as a political ploy to establish a secure and stable environment. Given their symbolic power in helping the public develop confidence in the peace consolidation process, successful disarmament programs should include bonfire ceremonies.[48]

**Lesson #4: Develop Gun "Buy-Back" and "Weapons-for-Development" Programs To Achieve Complete Disarmament**

In order to reduce criminal acts, consolidate peace and stability, and achieve complete disarmament necessary for sustainable development, it is imperative to develop incentive programs to collect hidden weapons and weapons not surrendered. Such programs include "turn-in", "buy-back", "swap" or "weapons-for-development" programs, where weapons can be traded for cash or swapped for food, housing and construction materials.[49]

Substantial completion of the disarmament component of the mandate is fundamental to the long-term stability of the country.[50] Formal disarmament conducted by UN and regional peacekeeping missions does not lead to the complete elimination or collection of weapons.[51] Large quantities of weapons remain either in hidden storage sites, arms caches, or in unauthorized private hands. Arms often remain unreported because the parties are not entirely confident in the peace process and hold back some of their best weapons for a possible renewal of hostilities.[52] Therefore, the availability of these weapons contributes to a resurgence and increase in violence and crime in post-conflict areas.

Some critics of gun buy-back programs argue that these programs run the risk of creating an illegal arms market and reward dangerous former combatants who may have previously used the same weapons to harm innocent civilians.[53] These critics assert that in the event that the

peace agreement fails, warring parties intent on fighting, will have money to purchase new weapons and resume hostilities after receiving cash from turning in their old weapons.[54] Coletta also states that the danger of these programs is that ex-combatants will associate the surrender of their weapons with a cash payment.[55] The problem here lies in the perception of a program as an arms-buy-back scheme as was the case in Sierra Leone where fighters associated their surrender of any weapon with a $150 cash reward. It can be argued that gun return programs that reward participants through vocational skills training and contribute to economic development are the most desirable. There should also be incentives for "grouped turn-ins", which create peer pressure for the collective return of weapons.[56] Turn-in policies where individuals can surrender guns on a "no questions-asked policy" or in complete anonymity are also beneficial.[57]

It is essential, however, to note that the disarmament of former combatants and disarmament incentive programs for civilians should not be carried out simultaneously. If soldiers see that civilians are being compensated to hand over their weapons, soldiers may also demand payment for disarming. Therefore, civilian gun buy-back schemes or weapons-for-development programs should be implemented once the disarmament of combatants has been completed.[58] In addition, the timing of disarmament and reintegration programs must not be too closely linked.[59] Each program must be brief and have a specific end-date to decrease the opportunity for weapons to be smuggled into the country and turned in for buy-back cash.[60] The national legal justice system must also be used to hold possessors of illegal arms criminally accountable and fine them with heavy penalties.

Nonetheless, experience has also shown that disarmament alone has no long-term benefits if it is not accompanied by the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants

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into civil society through economically viable alternative lifestyles, as well as socioeconomic development for the country as a whole.

### *Demobilization Best Practices*

"Demobilization begins where disarmament ends".[61] After emerging from years of civil war and conflict, former freedom fighters, rebels, and guerilla soldiers abandon their military roles to adopt civilian status.[62] Ex-combatants should be released or discharged from military quarters or cantonment sites as soon as possible to prevent the cantonment period from going beyond the tolerance level of the combatants, who may revert to taking UN camp personnel hostage, blocking roads, and commandeering vehicles to get out.[63]

### Lesson # 1:  Provide a Strong Public Information Program

The dissemination of accurate and timely information among target groups and the public on the objectives of DDR buyback schemes and weapons-for-development programs is essential for success. Effective demobilization programs must be accompanied by strong information campaigns that communicate information regarding cantonment sites, reinsertion benefits, military reintegration, and other socioeconomic opportunities to the public.[64]

Also, information on dangers associated with landmines should be disseminated to the general public through schools, the media, lectures, community organized meetings, posters and other awareness programs.  Reconciliation between ex-combatants and civil societies should be vigorously pursued through intensive information drives and public relations campaigns to foster national reconciliation.  The overarching goal of developing a strong public information program is to build confidence in the DDR process and create peer and public pressure to participate in DDR.[65]

### Lesson #2:  Conduct a Mandatory Orientation Program to Assist in the Transition to Civilian Life

It is crucial that ex-combatants participate in an orientation program that focuses on socioeconomic opportunities and information regarding civilian life prior to discharge from the cantonment sites.[66] Since former combatants have diverse political, social and economic backgrounds, they have different expectations of what their future life will be like as a civilian— orientation programs that inform and counsel former combatants on socioeconomic issues help to prepare them for their return to civilian life. Successful demobilization occurs when humanitarian NGOs and human resource professionals visit ex-combatants and their spouses at cantonment sites and advise them on finding shelter, educational issues, job skills training, medical and healthcare benefits, AIDS awareness, and civic rights and duties.[67]

It is essential that former combatants also acquire marketable skills that are relevant to the labor environment in which they live. Psychological assistance should also be provided to help ex-combatants address emotional issues such as overcoming war trauma, building confidence in returning to civilian life, and returning to a hostile civilian environment that may have suffered violence by their own hands.[68] These activities are essential because they "fall under the realm of peace-building and represent the transitional point between the demobilization of combatants and their full reintegration into society" and should be viewed as a form of preventive diplomacy.[69]

The orientation programs are also an ideal time to collect socioeconomic data to assess the needs, skills, and aspirations of ex-combatants to design future reintegration programs. In Uganda, for example, a DDR orientation exercise revealed that 17% of the combatants exhibited AIDS symptoms which in turn led to the development of an enhanced health program within the reintegration package.[70]

**Lesson #3:   Target Programs Towards Ex-Combatants**

Although combatants may often have the capacity to disrupt fragile peace settlements by returning to open hostilities or resorting to crime against the public population, such violence is deterred through programs that target former combatants, and build upon their disarmament and demobilization by employing monetary and educational incentives that are designed to facilitate the peaceful reintroduction of combatants into civilian life.[71]

Former combatants are a vulnerable group that often consists of "poor, illiterate, uneducated, unskilled fighters with few links to job and training opportunities."[72] Demobilizing soldiers "into a livelihood vacuum" without a sound reintegration plan often leads to disgruntled warriors and an increase in criminal activity as demonstrated in the former Soviet Union, Croatia, and the Balkans, where former soldiers participate in criminal activities across the region.[73]

Effective demobilization programs therefore implement an identification system to reduce the risk of political manipulation and corruption.[74] But this can present a challenge as it is often difficult to identify and define who is a "bona fide" combatant especially in civil wars where the militants range from child soldiers to militia irregulars.[75] For example during the on-going civil war in Guinea-Bissau, which began as a coup led by Brigadier-General Ansumane Mané against the government of President João Bernardo Vieira, peacekeeping forces employed a program that matches the socioeconomic profile of each ex-combatant. This approach permits the transparent selection of program beneficiaries.[76]

### *Best Practices for Reintegration*

Reintegration refers to ex-combatants' and their families' return to civilian life and the potential social and economic opportunities that will help them reintegrate into civil society. Reintegration commences after former combatants have been formally discharged from

cantonment but does not have a distinct end. It is not a distinct phase after demobilization, but rather is part of a seamless web of transitions from military to civilian life.[77] Reintegration programs are geared towards helping ex-combatants and their families secure sustainable livelihoods in their communities of return.[78] This period provides a safety net during the transition from war to peace and helps ex-combatants and their families bridge the difficult period between demobilization and reintegration.

**Lesson #1: Develop Programs That Extend Beyond the Short-Term Objectives of Demilitarization and Disarmament and Embrace Long-Term Goals of Sustainable Peace and Stability.**

Previously successful UN reintegration programs recognized the necessity of instituting a two-pronged approach that combined short-term objectives of emergency assistance with long-term objectives of development.[79] The demilitarization program employed by ONUMOZ in Mozambique adopted such an approach which sought to link short-term objectives with long-term goals. ONUMOZ's short-term objectives were to monitor the cease-fire, verify the withdrawal of foreign troops, supervise the demobilization of combatants, and verify the creation of a new national army.[80] ONUMOZ's long-term objectives were to develop vocational training projects for former combatants.

Mozambique's Reintegration Support Scheme (RSS) and Information Referral Service (IRS) program managed by the UN Office for Humanitarian Assistance Co-ordination (UNOHAC) are excellent examples of programs that provided incremental financial assistance and job market information while promoting integration into the local community.[81] These programs provided demobilized soldiers with 18 months of subsidies in the form of cash disbursements and provided a reasonable assurance of financial support for an extended period.[82] During this 18-month period it was hoped that the former combatants would find employment

and integrate into the local community.[83]  The RSS program also provided vocational kits that consisted of agricultural tools, seeds, and food rations for up to three months.[84]

In such reintegration programs, ex-combatants are given financial assistance before leaving the cantonment sites.  The primary goal of these financial aid packages is to assist the ex-combatants in their civilian environment by providing materials related to the immediate, daily needs of former combatants such as food, clothing, shelter, cooking utensils, tools, transportation, and education.[85]  Such demobilization and reintegration programs (DRPs) illustrate the warring parties' strong political will and commitment to the peace process, and provide the security necessary for people affected by war and the incentive to reinvest in their lives and in their country.[86]  These DRPs permit governments to down-scale their military forces and reduce defense expenses in order to shift human and material resources to foster reconstruction and development.

Successful reintegration programs also include reintegration sensitization to aid former combatants who are not always welcomed upon return to their communities. These reintegration programs appeal to the community members through public relations campaigns and community elders who play significant roles in the community and ensure the successful social reintegration of ex-combatants.[87]

**Lesson #2:   Implement Economic Reintegration Projects to Foster National Reconciliation**

Effective DDR programs also implement viable economic opportunities to bring about long-term stability. Countries that have demobilized their fighters after prolonged periods of civil war are usually incapable of financing these programs; therefore, it is crucial that the international community implement capital-intensive training programs for former combatants, since many have only combat skills and lack the qualifications of civilian professionals.[88]  This

aid serves as an economic benefit since community-based projects will provide employment for former combatants and, consequently, enhance the quality of life for members of the community.

In addition to capital intensive training programs, land is also an essential asset to the economic survival of former combatants who resettle in rural areas. Since the acquisition of land is difficult in many cultures, community elders and chiefs have been used in the reintegration process to make land accessible to former combatants.[89] However, due to years of violent conflict, fragile states, which depend on their land for environmental goods and services and their economic well-being, may plunge further into a "self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction, and social fragmentation" due to land degradation because there is not enough fertile soil to cultivate.[90]

Landmines also have a negative economic effect in countries that have endured prolonged periods of civil war since they restrict people from growing food on their farms, prohibit them from transporting food from rural villages to urban cities along heavily mined roads, and prevent cattle from grazing and finding water sources.[91] Therefore, clearing landmines from fields in order to allow people to resume essential agricultural activities is also a significant factor in economic reintegration. Another program that leads to successful reintegration is a mine action program that includes victim assistance and the reintegration of mine victims into civil society.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lusaka Agreement of August 1999, called for the clearance and an end to the use of landmines.[92] The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1291 (2000), has a mandate to develop an action plan regarding the assessment of mine and unexploded ordnances.[93] Keeping on track with its DDR plan, MONUC established the Mine Action

Coordination Center in Kinshasa and a regional UNMACC office in Kisangani in February 2002.[94]  Since the end of 2002, MONUC has helped the South African firm Mechem clear over 1,300,000 square meters of land including airstrips at Bunia, Kananga, Kindu, Kisangani, and Manono.[95]

**Lesson #3:  Reintegration Programs Must Address the Needs of Vulnerable Groups Such as Female and Child Soldiers, the Disabled and Chronically Ill, and Dependants of Combatants.**

The social problems that result from armed conflicts and affect special needs and minority groups in society are extremely serious and demand special attention and care.

Although reintegrated former child soldiers contribute to the social and economic life of the family, successful reintegration programs anticipate the increased impoverishment of these children's families after conflict and work to prevent their future recruitment in militia forces and educational delinquency.[96]  In addition, reintegration programs must focus on the needs of girl soldiers who in some countries comprise up to 40% of all child soldiers.[97]  Furthermore, reintegration must sensitize communities to the plight of girls and the obstacles they face to successfully reintegrate with their families and communities after suffering sexual abuse, and being forced to serve as "wives" and participate in violence.[98]

There must also be gender equity in reintegration programs that permit female former combatants to receive equal vocational training and employment opportunities, as well as funding for childcare.  The children and families of adult ex-combatants must be identified and their special needs addressed during the reintegration process. Some of the issues to be addressed are the ability of former combatants' wives to adopt, or be accepted by, a new community that may have distinct linguistic, ethnic or cultural traditions; and, coping with the new attitudes and behaviors of husbands and fathers who have been away at war.[99]  Economic reintegration programs must also provide widows who have lost their combatant-husbands with vocational

training to work in markets and shops so that they can support their orphaned children.[100] Ex-combatants who have been wounded, become disabled, or have become chronically ill due to combat, must be cared for.  Governments must assume full responsibility for providing medical care and rehabilitation facilities for these individuals and also provide vocational training that is suited to their special needs.
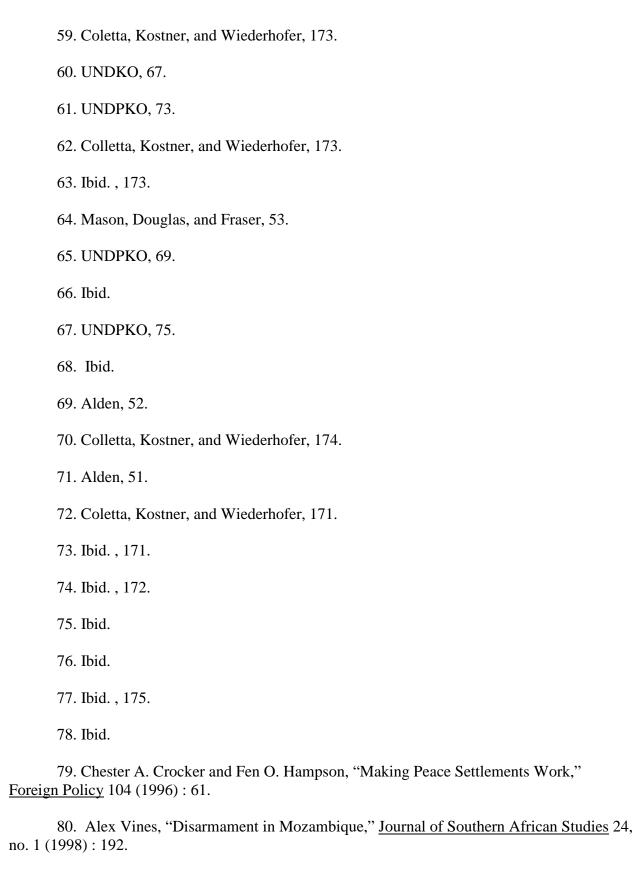
## Conclusion

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration is essential to restore peace and stability after the resolution of conflict and should be given due consideration early in the peace process. In the short-term, the ineffective disarmament and demobilization of former combatants may lead to an immediate relapse into war and trigger a downward spiral of violence. Yet, in the long-term, the failure to sufficiently reintegrate former combatants into civil society may incite a return to a life of crime and violence for former rebels who possess combative skills that are only suitable on the battlefield.  In fragile states where key infrastructure, civil order, and social justice institutions have been weakened by tumultuous conflict, increased crime due to inefficient disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, is a hindrance to attaining viable peace.  In essence, if sustainable peace is ever to be attained, DDR is a significant element of peacekeeping operations that must be embraced by both the international community and the parties to the conflict.

# NOTES

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