



Handbook of Best Practices
on Small Arms and Light Weapons

Best Practice Guide on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration (DD&R) Processes



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FSC Support Unit, Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE Secretariat
Kärntnerring 5-7, A-1010, Vienna, Austria

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I. Introduction

Since the 1990s, the value of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DD&R) programmes has become widely accepted within the international community. Reintegration programmes that usually follow the demobilization of regular and irregular armed forces, as well as armed civilians, are now seen as an essential step in the process towards development and often run in parallel to or preceding post-war reconstruction and emergency aid programmes. Special programmes have been designed to reintegrate former soldiers, guerrilla fighters and members of other armed groups, in order to help these ex-combatants gain opportunities for their future lives as civilians.

The importance of DD&R in efforts to combat the widespread availability of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) during and after crisis situations has also been recognized, both in the United Nations and in other fora. The UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, refers to DD&R processes, while at the UN Security Council, provision is often made for DD&R programs as essential elements of peacekeeping mandates.

The OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons describes DD&R measures as essential in dealing with post-conflict rehabilitation. Although few OSCE participating states have experienced complete DD&R processes on their own territories, their military personnel or development aid

workers may have come into contact with DD&R activities while on missions abroad. Furthermore, many states see DD&R as an important and effective tool to help conflict-affected countries move from war to sustainable peace. It is therefore important to train future military and civilian personnel in the various elements involved.

1. Aim

The aim of this chapter is to provide general standards for processes relevant to DD&R, including the essential steps that need to be carefully planned and carried out in order to reach the desired end-state, i.e. sustainable peace and development in a war-torn society. This guide focuses on the disarmament and the control over SALW in DD&R processes.

The DD&R process involves, first and foremost, ex-combatants. Civilians and other groups might also be included in the process at a later stage as part of a wider perspective, where the whole society is in need of reconstruction and rehabilitation. In this paper, SALW is defined in accordance with the OSCE Document.

2. General reference

The contents of this chapter have been adapted from a handbook on DD&R that will soon be published by the Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (Canada), Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit, GTZ (Germany), Nodefic (Norway) and the Swedish National Defence College (Sweden). The content of the handbook is based on experiences and lessons learned by the authors, who are practitioners with both military and civilian background. The handbook will be used in training for personnel involved in different types of DD&R processes.

II. Overview of the DD&R process

1. Definitions and functions

Disarmament is a process aimed at the collection, control and disposal of weapons within the post-conflict peace process. It can include safe weapon storage and potential destruction. Disarmament is essential as a confidence-building measure aimed at increasing stability in a tense, uncertain environment in which the participants and the general population may be anxious and uneasy. Disarmament also has a significant impact on sound social and economic development through the least diversion of human and economic resources for SALW. Therefore, the disarmament process must be designed bearing in mind the psychological state of the participants, and should include clauses for standing armed forces, guerrilla groups, paramilitary or militia forces, or civilians. At the same time, the success of disarmament and demobilization depends on a secure and stable environment. Therefore, measures to create such an environment are important preconditions for a weapons collection programme.

Demobilization can be seen as the opposite of the mobilization of combatants to an armed group. In the military sense, demobilization serves to disband an armed unit and to reduce the number of combatants in an armed group or to form a new armed force, be it regular or irregular. The technical objectives of demobilization and disarmament activities generally include improved quality and heightened efficiency of the armed forces. Demobilization helps reduce the costs of the standing armed forces. It allows the remaining

forces to be modernized and paid regularly due to the fact that less money has to be spent on personnel. Demobilization also provides an opportunity to restructure the armed forces in order to make them more efficient.

Different circumstances create different motives for demobilization and will therefore, necessitate different options. In some countries, a stable peace may only be possible if former opponents share power. Opposing sides have to be integrated into a common political system. The armed forces or liberation forces have to be assigned new tasks. Consequently, demobilization is usually enacted as part of a political imperative.

The most common alternative to the disbanding of a defeated armed group has been to incorporate elements of it into the victorious armed forces. Such strategic alliances occur above all in civil wars, in which there is a large number of actors. However, after the end of the war, there are often calls for reform and reduction of what may now be an excessively large army.

Demobilization in itself does not diffuse the actual potential for conflict, as it does not remove the root causes of conflict. These need to be addressed through long term strategies in order to achieve sustainable peace.

Reintegration is defined as the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain access to civilian forms of work and income. This

is essentially a social and economic process, with an open timeframe, which mainly takes place in the communities at the local level. It is an integral part of the overall reconstruction and development of a post-war society and, though a national responsibility, may require outside assistance.

The complete dissolution of one or more armed forces generally takes place when a new government or a dominant regional regime is able to question the political legitimacy of such armed groups. The background to the complete disbanding of the armed forces is generally a military defeat or at least a military stalemate, which has forced the warring factions to come to the negotiation table. This applies especially to wars within a state, in which none of the warring factions pulls out of the country. In these cases in particular, the reintegration of ex-combatants from all warring factions is a prerequisite for a sustainable peace.

Reintegration initiatives are long-term processes. Important components are: at the national level, the formulation of a national policy; at the regional level, support for regional implementation agencies; and, at the local level, emergency aid, transport to selected settlement regions, discharge payments, resettlement packages, reconstruction projects, and vocational training.

2. Essential steps of DD&R programs

The fundamental steps of DD&R are:

- a) Planning;
- b) Encampment;

- c) Registration;
- d) Disarmament;
- e) Pre-discharge orientation, and
- f) Final discharge of the ex-combatants.

The chronological sequence of demobilization and the relevance of the individual elements are determined primarily by the political situation preceding demobilization. This situation could be affected by *inter alia*: the roots and nature of the conflict, the political system, the composition of the warring factions, and the amount and type of weapons possessed by warring factions.

3. When does DD&R begin?

DD&R is an essential confidence-building measure, and therefore part of an ongoing peace process. Peace negotiations are essential to provide the basic conditions for DD&R planning to begin. Such negotiations are essentially a precursor to the peaceful conflict and dispute management mechanisms and should be part of the envisioned system of governance, which must provide human security through good governance and hence foster sustainable peace and development. Yet, for peace negotiations and the peace process to progress, it can be important to start implementation of DD&R programs while negotiations are still ongoing. Negotiating peace and prerequisites for DD&R are not separate and mutually exclusive measures. They may run in parallel, and their timelines do in fact overlap as the two support each other by building confidence.

III. SALW in the context of DD&R

It is important that SALW are considered in a DD&R process. Since weapons are involved in all armed conflicts, they are a major concern in any transition period to peaceful development. At the end of wars, especially civil wars, the number of weapons in circulation or in the hands of ex-combatants and the civilian population is very high. There is a risk that the weapons may be used not only to re-ignite conflict, but also for criminal purposes and as sources of illegal revenues. Consequently, it is very important to address those risks at an early stage. In DD&R processes, this is done during “the first phase” – the disarmament phase. Additional disarmament can also be carried out later in the process, through civilian arms collection programmes.

1. Objective

The direct objective of disarmament is to reduce the number of weapons in circulation in a country, and thus to reduce the risk of a renewed conflict. Disarmament and other SALW control measures can also help promote human security in post-conflict societies. They can reduce the levels of violence linked both to crime and ongoing tensions between former warring factions. They could, as broader confidence-building measures, contribute to a sense of stability and security in a society, and help convince the population that residual problems will henceforth be resolved peacefully. Such stability and security ultimately create the desirable conditions for peace and security.

2. Target groups

Disarmament initiatives must be focused and targeted at specific groups. What might be appropriate for a regular army might not be appropriate for guerrilla forces. In internal conflicts where irregular forces have fought either alongside or against conventional military forces, the target groups for disarmament programmes should include civilians who are not members of an armed group, but had armed themselves with SALW for self-defence purposes.

3. Disarmament process

Disarmament comprises the following steps:

- a) weapons survey;
- b) weapons collection;
- c) weapons storage;
- d) weapons destruction; and
- e) weapons redistribution.

3.1. Weapons survey

A weapons survey is needed to answer vital planning questions at an early stage. The following questions should be answered.

- Approximately how many weapons are there?
- What types of weapons should be handed in, and what destruction processes should be used?
[See BPG on Destruction techniques]
- Who is expected to turn in weapons, and how is it known that all of them have been obtained.
- Who controls weapons outside the armed forces

(paramilitary and international security forces, police, special police, gendarmerie etc.)?

- Are there groups of armed individuals or criminals that remain a threat to security?
- Where are the armed groups and heavy weapons stocks located, and what will happen to the stocks?

In some cases an inventory of weapons is part of the peace negotiations.

3.2. Weapons collection

Weapons collection points should be organized, either in assembly areas or in separate reception centres. International military observers normally manage these reception centres if the United Nations or other representatives of the international community monitor the peace process.

When the combatants hand in their weapons, the following procedure could be used: each weapon could be registered and all pertinent information (serial number, type of weapon) recorded. In addition, the personnel at the reception centre should also note information on the name, unit and military ID or equivalent of the ex-combatant, as well as the site where the weapon was handed in.

3.3. Weapons storage

The inability to destroy the collected weapons, which could be caused by the absence of equipment, may necessitate at least temporary storage. It may be that no decision has been taken yet on the destruction of the weapons due to the lack of confidence among the parties concerned. The weapons may be forwarded for conversion and/or redistribution to the local military or civilian police. When storing weapons, it is important to

take into account certain considerations, including the duration and conditions of storage and most importantly the physical security of storage. [See *BPG on Stockpile management and security*] Safety is of primary importance when the storage of ammunition and explosives is considered.

Weapons may be stored after collection instead of being destroyed for several reasons. Dual key procedures can be a transitional step between laying down weapons and relinquishing all access to them. During dual key procedures, the storages are locked and guarded. At an early stage, members of the disarming forces can be allowed to keep their weapons to guard the containers. Both international observers and the on-site faction commander retain a key to the storage. Planning should be flexible and always include a list of measures to be taken if an incident occurs, in order to maintain trust in the process.

3.4. Weapons destruction

The destruction of SALW must take many factors into consideration, including safety, costs, effectiveness and the verification of destruction. Methods used for the destruction of SALW cover a wide range of possibilities from simply rendering the weapons inoperable to complete destruction. [See *BPG on Destruction*]

Weapons destruction is not only a practical and efficient method of disarmament, but also a symbolic gesture, if carried out through public display, and may help change the outlook of civilians (such as a public bonfire of weapons or “flame of peace”). Such symbolic gestures should, however, be connected to long-term initiatives and programmes.

3.5. Weapons redistribution

Weapons redistribution can be a sensitive issue in post-conflict peace building. Clearly, not destroying weapons leaves them available for use in possible future conflicts. To avoid complications, such as the leakage of returned weapons or extended storage periods, it is necessary to develop a timetable for redistribution. The concentration and distribution of SALW must be monitored to ensure that the process is transparent and that ex-combatants are not inadvertently re-armed. The implementation and monitoring of the process by a neutral third party is of primary concern in order to ensure proper redistribution and continued monitoring after the process is complete.

3.6. Removal of weapons from civil society

The process of collecting weapons from civilians is often very difficult. It should be borne in mind that there is a number of strong reasons why civilians choose to hold weapons. Not all of these will be reversible. Among civilians, arms are often seen as a symbol of status and a sign of belonging to the community. All these aspects combined make it difficult to collect SALW from a society. Significant incentives in the form of money, development/reconstruction programmes and confidence-building measures must be established to effectively substitute for weapons in these areas.

Despite this, in many regions the possession of weapons is of cultural and/or political significance and cannot be eradicated. A long-term comprehensive strategy must be developed with a view toward reducing the number of weapons available to civilians commensurate with the improving

security situation in the country or region, before any tactical plan is established or implemented.

The overall strategy should address issues of security sector reform, good governance as well as gender roles. All these elements must be aimed at the creation of sustainable security and hence an environment in which people feel safe.

All sectors of society, including national and local authorities, the police, the armed forces and civil society, should be involved in developing and implementing the strategy. The involvement of the international community can also be desirable in terms of support and assistance, or as a guarantor of the process. The following factors are important to consider when analysing the situation:

- a) The political and security situation in the country:** Do citizens need to remain armed for self-protection and personal security? Is the crime level high, and is criminal activity a great concern to the population as a whole? Are the local police or security forces unable to deal with the problem or are they indeed part of the problem themselves? These questions must be addressed before disarmament can be regarded as a positive and meaningful exercise.
- b) Culture of weapons:** What is the culture regarding weapons in the country or region? What types of weapons are being targeted by the weapons collection programme?
- c) The perception of the population of these issues:** Does the local population feel insecure because of high levels of weapons possession, and how does this insecurity manifest itself? It is crucial that the problem is articulated and approached from the perspective of the

local population, not the international community. The expectation that a third party, such as peacekeepers, will ensure long-term security conditions necessary for disarmament is unrealistic and avoids the real problem. The government must as soon as possible assume responsibility for the provision of real and sustainable security to the population at large.

d) The need for a holistic approach:

Notwithstanding the importance of a locally driven process, a broad and comprehensive approach must be taken when setting conditions for meaningful disarmament. The international community must undertake such operations in a holistic manner and address disarmament and security as functions of the overall peace process and not as individual stand-alone exercises. International aid in the form of resources and support for security sector reform, such as assistance in training a national police force, is an example of the long-term and sustainable aid that produces better security, a higher level of stability and prepares the population to disarm.

To implement civilian disarmament projects, specific areas that show concentrations of weapons or armed individuals should be identified as targets for disarmament. Concerted campaigns to collect and destroy weapons, perhaps linked to buy-back programmes or community development initiatives, may be necessary in some areas. Often reluctance to disarm is related to a gun culture, which is difficult to change in the short-term. Local leaders play an important role in persuading people to give up weapons in this type of area.

Once the strategic plan has been decided upon, and the conditions for disarmament have been set, the points listed below should be considered as aids in developing the mechanics of weapons collection.

3.7. Voluntary weapons collection

The collection of weapons from the civilian population may take the form of voluntary surrender or forced collection by the military, civilian police, or other agencies. The preferred method is voluntary surrender. Forced collection of weapons is difficult to enforce and often dangerous for all parties involved.

Weapons collection may be supported by a variety of activities. Information campaigns help win the confidence and support of people and enhance liaisons and contacts with the population. A participatory process, where all sides are involved in designing the strategy as well as the implementation, is essential for disarmament to be successful. The establishment of national commissions, including the civil society, can help in this respect.

3.8. Incentive programs

Incentive programs are useful tools, especially in poorer societies where hard currency is much needed. The exchange of weapons for food or cash can, however, increase the value of arms just after it has dropped, and thus attract more weapons to the region. It also risks creating a perception that those who are flouting the law by owning illegal weapons are actually being rewarded by the authorities. Alternatively, the so-called “weapons in exchange for development” approach not only offers incentives to individuals turning in weapons,

but also shifts the focus towards community development needs, and thus can support social cohesion.

Strict enforcement of legislation pertaining to the possession of and trade in weapons should follow incentive programmes or amnesties. Such enforcement, however, should be preceded by a well-organized campaign, including notice of a specific deadline. If the population is informed and the conduct of law enforcement services is sufficient to inspire trust among the local communities, such a combination will increase the likelihood of success.

3.9. Weapons registration

Weapons registration can be either a complement or an alternative to weapons collection programs. Once the legislation on weapons possession has been refined and enforced, those weapons, now legally held, may be registered. It allows people to keep some of their weapons and thus feel that they are more secure. Furthermore, peacekeeping forces have estimates of how many weapons there are in a given area. This is particularly useful in future disarmament campaigns as a measure of success by comparing numbers of weapons collected with the records.

The registration process should be run jointly by international and civil agencies, or run by local police and monitored by international forces. This enables transparency through supervision, helps prevent international forces from becoming the “new enemy,” and increases the legitimacy of local forces. Accurate information collection and sufficient personnel are needed. At the same time, it does not require a large amount of equipment, storage space or high security measures. However, the local population can often be unwilling to come forward, fearing that the records may be used later to seize weapons or penalize those known to possess weapons. Local authorities and/or international forces should issue assurances that the records will not be used for other purposes. Incentives are often used to encourage registration and range from positive incentives such as food and money, to negative ones such as harsh laws and forced seizure of weapons.

IV. Training for DD&R

There is definitely more scope for training as well as research in the field of DD&R. Any individual going on a humanitarian or military mission needs tailored training. If these individuals are assigned to work in a mission area with a specific DD&R mandate, it is equally important that they know the features of the process, the aim, and the desired end state. The disarmament and demobilization phases can be relatively short, while the reintegration phase can go on for several years and eventually turn into wider reconstruction of the society as a whole. In order not to lose sight of the overall process, it is very important that theoretical and practical training be given at each step. Special attention should be given to the planning and co-ordination of these processes.

The training should be international and should be provided to a mixed group of participants, representing the military, civilian police, diplomats and humanitarian aid workers. All these functions are parts of today's multinational and multifunctional missions. In order to foster understanding of each other's work, as well as a professional culture, it is worth commencing the training process as soon as possible.

V. Evaluation

There are various means and measures to evaluate DD&R programmes, in part or in whole.

International organizations, such as the United Nations, are often partners in these programmes, and have best practice units where experiences in peacekeeping missions are gathered. The World Bank regularly supports demobilization and reintegration programmes (although not disarmament) and also has an extensive evaluation apparatus. The DD&R Reader published by Canada, Sweden, Norway and Germany (from which this guide is derived) is one example of a compilation of lessons learned from different past and present DD&R programmes, and serves as a manual for use by those planning future programmes.

The Logical Framework Approach should also be mentioned as a well-known approach to a programme or project design, and to monitoring and evaluation, especially concerning humanitarian assistance and development aid.

However, it can be argued that evaluation procedures for entire DD&R processes need further development and refinement in order to provide examples of best practices and to enable comparative analyses.

VI. Conclusion

Since weapons are involved in all armed conflicts, they are of major concern in transition to peaceful development. In this context, a number of key principles can be identified. Security and effective control over small arms are clearly prerequisites for stability in a post-conflict environment. Arms control emphasizes the inter-relationship between conflict resolution, demobilization, disarmament and development. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants provide a challenge to governments, peacekeepers, development agencies and NGOs. The successful integration of ex-combatants into civilian society lays the foundation for sustainable peace and demilitarization. It is thus important to develop specific tools that are directed at the special and individual needs of demobilized combatants. Focus should be first placed on the individual, then shift toward a community-oriented approach, making the individual ex-combatants part of the society and providing them with a sense of belonging and responsibility as the reintegration programme matures.

This Best Practice Guide has outlined the importance of co-ordinating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, focusing on SALW. There is no general formula that can be used in all DD&R processes and SALW control programmes. Each DD&R process needs to be developed individually, taking into account the circumstances of any given situation. However this guide attempts to outline the essential steps that need to be considered in order to address comprehensively the disarmament of ex-combatants. These certainly need to be adjusted according to the specific situation.

