

Lessons Learned about DDR by the people of EPES Mandala Consulting

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Thanks especially to General Henny van der Graaf, to Chimene Mandakovic, David de Beer and Dennis Brennan, and also to many other colleagues whose life and work have illuminated these lessons from the field. The purpose of this paper is to share common experiences and stimulate better results for peace across the world. We welcome additional comments and suggestions and criticisms. Really!

Index Table

1. DDR is not enough : you need DDR + SSR

- 1.1. Negotiating a peace framework (including a ceasefire)**
- 1.2. Managing 3D4R, or RDRDRDR**
- 1.3. Investing heavily and quickly in the Peace Economy**
- 1.4. Launching comprehensive Security Sector Reform**

2. Lessons Learned

1. DDR is not enough : you need DDR + SSR

Introduction

The shorthand 'DDR' tells the wrong story, even though the moniker has gained wide acceptance in UN and international parlance. Experience from successful peace building programs leads EPES Mandala to promote a much broader approach. We define DDR as only one piece of SSR, Security Sector Reform. We therefore address a range of actions that are often neglected under the simplistic label of DDR:

- Confidence building between armed forces and civilians
- Redefining respect and the roles of police and military forces
- Creating a coherent legal framework for peace and disarmament
- Building cooperation between neighbouring countries
- Mobilizing civil society for peace building and reducing violence
- Reducing the number of illegal weapons and surplus stockpiles
- Destroying surplus arms and ammunition to build confidence
- Ensuring that official stockpiles are well managed and controlled

As we explain in a different Lessons Learned document:

Security Sector Reform is a key element of building peace and DDR is just one part of SSR.

Peace is a complex business. Peace is born out of violence, but the meaning and nature of 'peace' is culturally specific. For most Europeans, seeing a rifle on the street creates fear and symbolizes a threat of violence – whereas an Albanian, an Afghan or an American it find absurd that people would consider the sight of a rifle 'a threat to peace'. Guns are a part of some cultures, not of all cultures. Clearly 'peace' does not have the same meaning in every culture. Building peace is especially complex in societies that are recovering from violent conflict.

A ceasefire and a peace agreement are not sufficient to bring an end to open hostilities. Ivory Coast shows that political will is needed to move from a ceasefire towards a more permanent peace process. DDR is often an early and necessary next step toward lasting peace: in Afghanistan, demobilising the military forces was necessary to

cleanse the Ministry of Defence and to create a new Afghan army. But Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration are only three of many risk-laden steps on the path to peace.

We use the expression 3D4R to emphasize that there are many small-but-vital steps involved in bringing combatants into civilian life, and the process contains more 'Rs' than 'Ds'. After years of armed conflict, there is often no civilian life into which ex-combatants can re-integrate. We therefore believe that DDR, DDDRRRR, 3D4R, or RDRDRDR is never enough, and it needs to be inserted into a broader process of Security Sector Reform.

We might schematize the peace process as FOUR BIG PHASES that are not sequential but need to run concurrently:

- **Negotiating a peace framework (starting with a ceasefire)**
- **Managing 3D4R, or RDRDRDR**
- **Investing heavily and quickly in the Peace Economy**
- **Launching comprehensive Security Sector Reform**

1.1. Negotiating a peace framework

If there is no agreed peace formula, 3D4R will not succeed. Getting agreement between rival factions involves mediators (some big, many of them invisible and these include the mothers and grandmothers of armed fighters). Mediation takes place through political pressures, meetings and conferences, and it generally leads to some form of written peace agreement. The Afghan *Bonn Agreement* excluded the Taliban, and this example shows that DDR can be technically successful and yet – because there is no agreed Afghan peace framework – the demobilisation and disarmament has had very little impact on lasting peace.

We believe peace negotiations are an essential part of conflict resolution. They should take place in-country and close to the men with guns. Agreements negotiated in big hotels in foreign countries tend to create doubt in the minds of ordinary foot soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Often leaders find it difficult to 'sell' the peace agreement to their men. The fact that the Sierra Leone agreement was negotiated in Togo, and the Ivorian agreement in France, did not encourage the guys with guns to have confidence in the agreement their leaders had signed.

1.2. Managing DDR – or 3D4R

RDRDRDR - brings in the weapons and the combatants, and demobilisation for peace is supposed to offer them a better future in a non-violent society. Although every conflict is distinct, there are certain lessons that have been learned in the field and which are common to almost every situation. One is the rule that you should never offer cash for

weapons, which fails because creates a thriving market for the very product you are trying to eliminate from the market. So many governors or ministers or UN colonels have tried the simple idea of paying cash to demobilizing soldiers, and then have to back-track that this as to be our first Lesson Learned: don't try it! Another lesson from experience is that collecting ammunition and explosives is as important as collecting weapons.

We define the following steps as essential components for almost every DDR programme, and we call it 3D4R:

- **Disarmament of all armed groups** – every soldier should bring a weapon, but do not use this rule to exclude non-combatant victims of war, like girls. Make sure you collect ammunition and explosives as well as weapons from individual ex-combatants, and be prepared to enter into special negotiations with commanders who probably control hidden stocks of explosives, ammo, mines, small arms and even heavy weapons. Several DDR programmes failed to include ammo in the initial plan, and later regretted it!
- **Destruction of illegal and surplus weapons + ammunition** : if these are handed over to the local armed forces instead of destroyed, you can be sure that some weapons (and all the hand guns) will disappear, and they will 'leak' sooner or later into the market for illegal and criminal weapons (Mozambique provides the biggest example of this, but this rule is universal). EPES Mandala believes that the definition of 'disarmament' in post-conflict zones should include 'destruction'. We favour public destruction of weapons, and 'Flames of Peace' are an important way to build public confidence in the reality of peace. All destruction is potentially dangerous and needs expertise, which we can provide. Naturally explosives have to be destroyed by high-level technical specialists.
- **Demobilization and Reinsertion** – providing ID cards is the Demobilization part, and framed Certificates of Recognition and Valour : but Reinsertion is equally vital for former fighters entering the process of returning to 'normal' life. Reinsertion provides medical treatments, career planning advice, aptitude tests, literacy and vocational training, information about AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases, human rights and anger management training, and preparation of fighters for integration into family and community. These are all part of this important process that should take just a few weeks. As the Sierra Leone experience showed on 6th January 1999 (when Freetown was sacked by men fed up by the slowness of DDR) it is important that the 'cantonment process' be kept short. Former fighters are often grouped into DDR camps: the regime must include plenty of sport and entertainment, good food, and a forward-looking programme of training that keeps restless young men from revolt and convinces them about the benefits of disarmament.
- **Reintegration of armed groups** – moving armed men and commanders into profitable, income-generating activities or careers is not easy. There needs to be an expanding economy to provide job opportunities, which are often hard to find – especially for the handicapped. Reintegration is intended to take men away from their old fighting units, and help them fit into a society run by the rules of decentralized, democratic governance. Investment in the peace economy and rebuilding roads is

vital, to show the Xcoms and warlords that a peaceful future looks better than their violent past.

- **Rehabilitation of infrastructure, communities and individuals**, including youths – trauma counseling for child soldiers, and for men and women who have suffered from the violence. The physical rehabilitation of disabled veterans is equally as vital as rebuilding homes and schools. It is important to remember that villagers often suffer more than the combatants: in Liberia, demobilization generated anger among villagers whose livestock had all been killed during the war, because all the benefits of peace appeared to flow to the men who had caused the suffering with their weapons. A Western-style focus on individuals may not fit Africa's community culture.
- **Remembering youth** : children and young people including former child soldiers want to learn about politics and participate in the changes happening in their country. Their participation may be positive for them. However many of them have been misused and they are often manipulated by politicians and given risky roles in demonstrations, for example. Many of them do not want to return to their communities because they're stigmatized. It is important to see Children and Youth as a resource for peace and not just only as victims.
- **Resettlement of displaced populations** is often an important part of building peace. Refugees outside the country may be important to the success of any permanent peace settlement (as the Rwanda-Congo experience shows), and they need a lot of support. Sometimes however, as in Darfur today, refugees are actually better off than internally displaced persons (IDP) whose vulnerability is increased by the fact that they may not benefit from the external assistance, legal status or protection accorded to refugees.
- **Reconciliation between communities** is often forgotten by DDR designers. There are traditional and collective forms of healing and forgiveness that need to be mobilized, so that the causes of violence and resentment can be treated. The underlying causes of conflict need to be broadly discussed and analysed, and local forms of mediation and reconciliation need to be reinforced to transform conflict into lasting peace. For South Africa the Truth & Reconciliation Commission was very helpful, but this model does not suit all cultures.

These steps are not sequential. The label RDRDRDR suggests there is a good case for starting the preparation of the 'R' components before the 'D'. Although no one denies that the DDD comprise a critical and highly dangerous phase of the process, the success of DDR is always judged on the results of the 'R' components and their long-term contribution to peace.

If you count them, there are at least five 'Rs' in the list. In the culture-specific Afghan context we can add two more: the failure of the DDR process to understand the local need for Respect and Recognition has caused political headaches for the Afghan government, as former army officers complain bitterly about their loss of honour and social status.

Rehabilitation¹ is often the place you must start, in a post-war context. The ‘R’ phases are so complex, that Rehabilitation should be seen as a pre-condition for Reintegration. You cannot demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants successfully, if there are no functioning communities for the Xcoms to go to, and no functioning peace economy in which they can earn a living. The complexity of this seven-step 3D4R process explains why we reject the shorthand formulation ‘DDR’: for if you miss even one of these steps, you may miss them all.

It goes without saying that this is not a short-term process. Experience from the field shows that a typical donor-driven three-year programme for DDR is designed to fail. In this field, Ambassadors are amateurs. They, like us, need to study and apply the Lessons Learned.

It takes 18 months to design, fund, organise and obtain the people and equipment needed for a major DD programme: so how can it possibly be completed in only three years? Experience shows that a 3D4R programme should be designed to last seven years, even if it funded in 3-year tranches.

1.3. Investing in the Peace Economy.

Peace is measured not by the number of weapons collected, but by the amount of trade and private investment that take place under the new conditions of peace. Violence blocks economic activity, and positive peace restores it.² Peace needs investment. In Cambodia, the return of peace was signaled by the decision of private investors to rebuild shops and hotels.

No DDR programme – nor even a 3D4R programme – is designed to create jobs.

The case of Afghanistan is exemplary. While the international community has invested hundreds of millions of US dollars in building a war economy to fight the Taliban after September 2001, virtually nothing was invested in roads, bridges, buildings or government infrastructure during the first five years. As a result, the UN’s technically successful the DDR project, demobilising 63,000 fighters by 2006, was judged a ‘failure’ by most of these men who found they had few economic prospects. Many received training for functions that the economy could not support: carpenters and tailors cannot make a living, if no one can afford to buy their services. Today, many of these Xcoms are stockpiling weapons once more.

¹ In the BICC-mediated E-conference in DDR that took place before the Afghanistan programme was started, one of the conclusions of participants was that the Afghan programme should be called RDD instead of DDR: because the ‘R’ sections take longer to plan and implement than the dangerous-but-finite ‘D’ sections.

² Professor Johann Galtung - ‘the Father of Peace Studies’ - categorizes a ceasefire as ‘negative peace’ and contrasts it with a ‘positive peace’ that is sustainable because it tackles the underlying causes of conflict.

1.4. Launching comprehensive Security Sector Reform (SSR).

Many of the Xcoms will wish to start a career in one of the uniformed government services, yet violent conflict may have destroyed the police force and disrupted border guards and customs and fire services so severely that they do not provide viable options for beneficiaries of DDR. Nor is it easy to persuade people to surrender their weapons and ammunition, if they have no confidence in the capacity of the authorities to keep order and impose the rule of law.

A separate paper has been written on the Lessons Learned for SSR, so this is simply a short summary of salient points. Experience from successful peace building programs leads EPES Mandala to promote a holistic approach involving a range of actions that are often neglected under the label of DDR: DDR needs to be a part of SSR. Here is a list for SSR actions:

- Confidence building between armed forces and civilians
- Redefining respect and the roles of police and military forces
- Writing Codes of Conduct, then training people to understand and respect them
- Rebuilding & retraining police and other uniformed forces with minimum equipment
- Creating a coherent legal framework for peace and disarmament and training judges
- Promoting debate on small arms between government, legislature, and civil society
- Building cooperation and cross-border collaboration between neighbouring countries
- Mobilizing civil society for peace building and reducing violence
- Reducing the number of illegal weapons and surplus stockpiles
- Destroying surplus arms and ammunition to build confidence
- Ensuring that official armouries are well managed and stockpiles are controlled

2. Lessons Learned by DDR - or 3D4R - peace makers

- **Never offer cash for weapons:** it creates a market for the very product you are trying to eliminate.
- **Collecting ammunition and explosives** is as important as collecting weapons.
- **DDR as a programme cannot stand alone:** always place DDR or 3D4R inside a broader political programme promoting Security Sector Reform.
- **Police and other uniformed forces need to be strengthened,** for they create the security conditions that encourage Xcoms to give up their arms.
- **Many Xcoms can be trained for the police, customs, border or fire services** and since they need jobs, this brings a double benefit of security plus employment.
- **A comprehensive peace agreement is necessary** for 3D4R to produce peace: if there is still fighting, no combatant groups will disarm (cf the Afghan and Congolese situations, where fighting has overtaken peace negotiations).
- **Negotiate with commanders** and agree detailed disarmament and demobilisation plans and calendars with them, before starting to disarm their men.
- **Commanders need additional, prestigious incentives** to keep their interest in the process: they will not be satisfied with a tin of oil and packets of dried milk.
- **Every soldier should surrender a weapon and ammunition;** but do not use this rule to exclude non-combatant victims of war, like girls/wives and child soldiers.
- **Child victims of war may not know how to dismantle a weapon:** using this as a test discriminates against girls especially, yet they may have been kidnapped as sex-slaves and they need demobilizing and reintegration and rehabilitation as much as the men do.

- **Make sure you collect ammunition and explosives** as well as weapons from individual ex-combatants. Then have them destroyed.
- **Be absolutely rigorous in recording the number** and nature of each weapon collected, both for future reference and also to reassure Xcoms that they and their demobilisation are being taken very seriously.
- **Be prepared for special negotiations with commanders** who probably control hidden stocks of explosives, and organise in advance the transport, safe storage and professional destruction capability for large ammo stocks if they appear.
- **Destroy collected weapons in public**, and as close as possible to their place of collection. This will reassure the population that peace has come, truly. We prefer the Flame of Peace, which is a visible and spectacular confidence-builder for every onlooker. Destruction is therefore the third, and important D in 3D4R.
- **Avoid storing and recycling weapons and explosives.** All soldiers, all armies claim that they have insufficient equipment, and usually this is untrue. Almost every illegal weapon began life as a legal weapon, and these collected stocks will probably be sold off to rebels or criminals.
- **Ensure good management of official armouries.** In every country, ‘Leakage’ is a major source of rebel and criminal weapons. Destroying collected weapons will reduce the potential number of illegal weapons, but it is important to help the government to manage their own stock and to destroy their surplus stockpiles.
- **Mobilizing civil society for peace building** is a sure way to improve relations between the population and the Xcoms, while adding a force-multiplier to the 3D4R process. Civil society organizations (CSO) should be involved from the beginning of the design process, together with all the technical ministries and UN agencies, to maximise technical expertise, accumulated knowledge and outreach for reducing violence and integrating Xcoms.
- **Mobilise inter-faith councils as a part of civil society**, and encourage the organization of inter-faith peace services inside the cantonment camps, as well as throughout the general population.
- **Food packages from WFP are popular.** WFP is a valuable ally in every country for 3D4R. Sometimes the food is sold for cash because the transport is too much

trouble for an Xcom, but the monetary value is helpful and it does not carry the stigma of 'cash-for-weapons'.

- **Demobilisation is the easiest part of DDR.** Registering names, offering ID cards and presenting framed Certificates of Recognition and Valour are laborious but simple procedures: but without reinsertion and reintegration, D&D are pointless.
- **Reinsertion is a vital process for former fighters** returning to 'normal' life. Demobilisation should never be carried out without Reinsertion, especially if a cantonment system is used, where Xcoms are brought into camps.
- **Mix Xcoms in their tents and huts**, just as they will be mixing in their new civilian careers (as members of the police force, for example). Do not allow members of the same formerly armed group to create ghettos inside the cantonment, where old rivalries can be revived in gang fights.
- **Allow no weapons inside the cantonments.**
- **Create women-only and child-friendly spaces** where no men are allowed, and where rehabilitation and reconciliation can be encouraged among families.
- **Reinsertion should provide medical treatment** to Xoms and their families, as well as career planning advice, aptitude tests, literacy and vocational training, information about AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases, human rights and anger management training, and preparation of fighters for integration into family and community.
- **The 'cantonment process' should be kept short.** Former fighters need plenty of sport and entertainment, good food, and an active programme of training that prepares them actively to look forward to their new civilian life. After 6 weeks the camps should be closed and Reintegration should begin: which explains why the 4R needs to be prepared before the DDD begins.
- **Reintegration** takes men away from their fighting units, and fits them into a society run by the rules of decentralized, democratic governance. They need preparation for this, and then they need job.

- **Prior investment in the peace economy** is vital, for the best 3D4R programme will be judged a failure if the Xcoms cannot find work and incomes.
- **Rebuilding roads and bridges** is vital, so that the economy can (literally) begin moving again. With slow economic growth, there will be no peace. The international community strategy has failed in Afghanistan because vast expenditures have been thrown into the war economy, while the peace economy has been neglected.
- **Rehabilitation concerns infrastructure, communities and individuals**, including youths – everyone needs trauma counseling after a war, but community systems work better in many cultures, than the western tendency to focus on individuals. In fact, communities can be angered by too many perks for Xcoms.
- **Rebuilding & retraining police and other uniformed forces** (customs, border patrol and fire services), is an important part of rehabilitation, both so ensure security, and to provide jobs for Xcoms. They also need minimum equipment to function.
- **The physical rehabilitation of disabled veterans** is equally as vital as rebuilding homes and schools. It is important to remember that families and village communities often suffer more than the combatants, and the handicapped are an additional burden on impoverished families.
- **Youths and child soldiers**, often blamed for their condition, are primarily victims of war. They are often manipulated by politicians, Ways need to be found for young women and young men to participate in the development and rehabilitation of their communities. This often requires some form of purification ritual.
- **Many youths do not want to return to their communities**, because they are stigmatized or because they believe the city offers them more opportunity. We must work with that, not against it, turning Children and Youth into a resource for peace.
- **Resettlement of displaced populations** is often an important part of building peace, both internally displaced persons and external refugees. Traditional DDR designs seldom take account of the needs of refugees, yet many Xcoms may have displaced families that need resettling.
- **Reconciliation between communities** and former enemies is left out of most DDR designs, yet reconciliation is critical to turn people from to lasting, 'positive' peace. Traditional and collective forms of healing and forgiveness need to be mobilized, so that the causes of violence and resentment can be treated.

- **Reconciliation with the uniformed forces is also important.** It can be helpful to run multi-sectoral workshops where Codes of Conduct are written to clarify the roles of army, police, etc., and their obligations to respect civilian laws. Further outreach training is needed for the whole population to understand and respect the laws, but also for civilians to respect and trust the Xcoms in their new positions.
- **Codes of Conduct should also describe the limits of civilian oversight.** SSR and 3D4R are essentially political activities and they are intended, in part, to restore civilian (and democratic) control over the uniformed forces who have probably been out of control. Civilian oversight is needed for budgets and behaviour, but army and police chiefs need to be reassured that civilian oversight will not interfere with their day-to-day management of the uniformed forces.
- **These steps are not sequential.** As the label RDRDRDR suggests, the R and D components need to run concurrently, and the ‘R’ components need be prepared before the ‘D’ begins.
- **Soldiers should not run 3D4R.** Experience shows that the best structure has a diplomatic civilian Director, supported by two strong Deputy Directors: a Colonel to run the dangerous DDD parts and a development expert to run the complex 4R. The Demobilisation and Reinsertion phases should be run jointly as the interface of the DDD & RRRR. Both D and R need to be given equal value from Day 1.
- **Data collection should begin at once.** This is a development and a management function. Soldiers seldom understand the need for baseline data, nor the advantage of establishing systems for monitoring and evaluation that will guide the 4R phase through seven years or more – long after the soldiers have left.
- **It takes more than three years** to carry out all these steps. Seven years is a reasonable time for such a 3D4R programme.
- **The complexity of this seven-step 3D4R process** is obvious, yet every stage is important : for if you miss even one of these steps, you may miss them all.

Conclusion

These are some of the Lessons Learned from the combined experience of senior consultants in the EPES Mandala team. The check-list intended to be useful for program designers across the world.

Lessons Learned are never static. Every experience in the field brings new knowledge and new lessons. We are always happy to hear of such experiences, and we will be delighted to incorporate contributions into this paper from the field from practitioners who write to us.

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