



**Considering armed violence in the post-conflict transition:  
DDR and small arms and light weapons reduction initiatives**  
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## The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

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The AVPI is made up of four projects:

- 1) A Briefing Papers series on armed violence and poverty reduction measures in the areas of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration), SSR (Security Sector Reform), Conflict Assessment, and Rural Livelihoods.
- 2) An assessment of the impact of small arms projects on arms availability and poverty.
- 3) A research project which documents and analyses the circumstances in and processes by which armed violence exacerbates poverty and development.
- 4) A research project documenting the impact of arms transfers on poverty and development.

All of these papers can be downloaded at [www.bradford.ac.uk/cics](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/cics).

This initiative, which expanded beyond DFID to involve a number of donor agencies and NGOs, grew out of a concern to understand the problems created by arms availability and their violent use, and of the ways in which measures to reduce armed violence can be integrated into poverty reduction work at both policy and programme level. This briefing aims to highlight and clarify the importance of the availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and associated armed violence, for development programming in the area of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). The author would like to thank Robert Muggah for comments made on an earlier draft.

## 1. Introduction

This briefing paper seeks to increase awareness of and review the linkages between disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and small arms and light weapons (SALW) reduction in the context of post-conflict reconstruction (PCR). It is targeted at those working on poverty reduction at both the policy and programme level, particularly those with comparatively modest engagement in these areas. Its objective is to outline the types of activities that have been undertaken under these rubrics, the difficulties and constraints encountered at the level of implementation, and, in particular, to identify opportunities in linking SALW programmes and DDR. It also seeks to highlight the problems created by widespread arms availability and usage in PCR. This briefing paper is not intended as a comprehensive review of the state of DDR/SALW/PCR programming and policy, but rather an introduction to some of the core issues.

DDR assistance is now a relatively well-established area of programming for DFID and many other development aid agencies (see box 1 below for a description of DDR and SALW processes), as is PCR. However, they are often inadequately linked with SALW programmes, to mutual disadvantage. For the purposes of this paper, a distinction is drawn between DDR and SALW programming. Operationally, this has tended to be the case with SALW initiatives often being a distinct follow-up activity to DDR. However, it is recognised that of late some SALW programming is tending to merge or connect more with DDR and with PCR. This briefing thus aims to highlight ways in which efforts to address SALW and the armed violence associated with them in post-conflict countries can contribute to the effectiveness of DDR and PCR programming, and vice versa.

Many of the problems associated with the post-conflict period arise from the continuing activities of armed groups and misuse of weapons. Countries emerging from war are particularly at risk from the re-emergence of armed conflict, and also from widespread violence and intimidation. Excessively available arms, particularly SALW, are often an important factor in the escalation, intensity, spread and duration of conflict and violent criminality, which obstructs and undermines peace-building and humanitarian and development aid. The poor are generally especially vulnerable due to their exposure to armed violence and to declining quality and access to services.

Although DDR programmes aim to disarm and integrate ex-combatants, they are seldom integrated with initiatives to collect and control arms amongst other sectors of society, or with longer-term programmes to provide a safe and secure environment for development to proceed. SALW programmes can help to address some of the shortfalls experienced with DDR programmes and can provide useful complementary support for wider PCR efforts.

### **Box 1: What are DDR/SALW programmes?**

DDR typically refers to the process of collecting arms, particularly SALW, from combatants after peace agreements or cessations of civil wars and returning combatants to civilian life. The term 'DDR' is used here but other terms such as 'DDRR' (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and reconciliation) and 'D3' have been used to describe similar process dealing with post-conflict weapons usage and possession. The principal objectives of DDR programmes are to prevent the resumption of armed conflict and help create the conditions for post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. The first disarmament stage has involved amassing combatants in assembly or cantonment areas, collecting their weapons for destruction, storage, or re-allocation, identifying and registering them, and assessing some of their basic needs and requirements. The process of demobilisation builds on this by preparing combatants for entry into a new and reformed national army under civilian control or by returning them to civilian life. This process is frequently facilitated with transitional allowances to tide ex-combatants over until they find a peaceful livelihood. The third phase – reintegration – is designed to provide assistance in the form of, for example, training, allowances, tools and implements, so that ex-combatants can be productive and rehabilitated members of society that no longer pose a threat.

SALW programmes include a wide range of measures to control and reduce availability and flows of SALW, not only in post-conflict countries but also in other states experiencing problems of armed violence, insecurity, or illicit trafficking. Types of SALW programmes have included: voluntary weapons collection programmes from civilians; public arms destruction events; development and implementation of regulations to control SALW possession, trade and use; measures to support and improve enforcement of such regulations; public awareness and education; measures to prevent, combat and reduce illicit trafficking of SALW; sub-regional co-operation, for example in border controls; and efforts to improve the management and security of authorised SALW holdings by the police, army and civilians. In post-conflict contexts, SALW programmes have tended to take place separately to DDR processes. Sometimes, they have addressed gaps in DDR processes and have tended to be sequenced towards the end or after DDR. Weapons for development programmes, for example, have sought to persuade arms holders – often civilians or armed groups who were outside the formal DDR process – to give up weapons for specific (collectively-determined) incentives such as integration into community work schemes. This programming has tended to be more driven by developmental, community peace-building objectives, and individual incentives than DDR which, at least in its initial phases, has been predominantly overseen by the military.

## **2. What problems have DDR programmes experienced, and what risks do they entail for PCR and development?**

Persuading combatants, and also civilians, to give up their arms is often difficult, not least because weapons possession can often be valued for social, economic, and security purposes in post-conflict contexts. Further, it may not always be appropriate to disarm in environments where collecting SALW can actually strengthen the hand of spoilers, create asymmetries and even heighten insecurity. The challenges of

disarming, even where appropriate, have often been made worse by inadequately designed and implemented DDR initiatives. Key areas where DDR has sometimes been ineffective include:

### **2.1 Arms collection**

Disarmament and arms collection programmes, although sometimes successful in collecting a considerable number of weapons, have often failed to collect all the weapons specifically scheduled for collection under DDR agreements. Some weapons remain hidden in arms caches as an insurance against failed DDR programmes or for use in criminal activities. DDR initiatives have sometimes turned a blind eye to the problem of caches prioritising the maintenance of a ceasefire over comprehensive disarmament. Another problem has been the drift of individual ex-combatants back to communities, still retaining weaponry, as occurred in Somaliland, rather than a structured demobilisation.

### **2.2 Weapons buy-backs**

Schemes to collect illicit weapons from ex-combatants by offering cash incentives have sometimes run into difficulties as they have inflated prices for weapons and created parallel markets where weapons have proliferated rather than been reduced. They have also created resentment among civilians who have interpreted cash incentives as rewarding combatants who they often regard as responsible for the conflict.

### **2.3 Armed groups/civilian weapons holdings**

Key groups have fallen outside disarmament mandates such as militia, criminal groups, and armed civilians as they have not always been a party to the peace agreements that have articulated DDR initiatives. These pose considerable problems in the PCR phase, particularly in terms of banditry and violent criminality. DDR programmes are seldom complemented by interventions, much less regulatory mechanisms, to collect and control civilian weapons, which have tended to be hidden in homes and communities rather than contained in arms caches.

### **2.4 Registration failures**

Significant numbers of ex-combatants fail to register in DDR initiatives. These unregistered ex-combatants pose significant risks for PCR as they are likely to feel resentful and may engage in violence or become socially disruptive. DDR programming has often been powerless to provide adequate incentives to engage them in meaningful disarmament. At the same time, there has been the problem of non-entitled combatants and civilians trying to infiltrate DDR initiatives to claim benefits. Women and child soldiers, particularly in the early days, were sometimes inadequately integrated into reintegration initiatives, or as is still sometimes the case, their special needs have been inadequately catered for. There remains a continuing problem in DDR initiatives as to whether combatants' dependents should receive reintegration support.

### **2.5 Stockpile management**

When SALW have been collected during DDR programmes they have frequently not been stored in secure and safe facilities. As a result, collected arms have often been reclaimed, stolen or recycled into criminal networks and militias.

## 2.6 Regional arms flows

DDR programmes have failed to institutionalise comprehensive measures to prevent re-arming through regional arms flows, such as substantive border checks and customs. Nor have they tended to be linked into regional arms control measures and agreements.

## 2.7 Incomplete reintegration

Although reliable statistics are generally scarce, criminality has often appeared to increase in the aftermath of DDR as ostensibly “reintegrated” ex-combatants released into communities have failed to find livelihoods and employment – sometimes due to poorly constructed reintegration programmes. Reintegration programmes have often failed to meet the needs of ex-combatants with poor targeting, for example, in terms of training for viable livelihoods and employment. Further, many ex-combatants have adopted unrealistic assumptions regarding their future employment prospects and have been reluctant to consider training that might give them feasible options of making a sustainable living. A tendency not to fully engage communities in the reintegration process has also been apparent in some DDR initiatives. However, more recent DDR operations, as in Sudan, have sought to identify local and regional implementing structures, strategies and mechanisms to ensure the representation and inclusion of communities (including youths, women, elders and combatants) in DDR dialogues, design and implementation.

## 2.8 Difficulties in re-constituting national armies

There are inherent political and economic difficulties associated with the determination and planning of the appropriate size and composition of national armies. In the post-conflict period, re-constituted national armies have only usually absorbed small numbers of ex-combatants and large numbers of them have been released into society with few prospects of employment, although in some other cases excess numbers of combatants have been fed into national armies creating a separate set of problems.

## 2.9 Returns to conflict

DDR initiatives have not necessarily enhanced peace-building. In countries such as Angola or Congo-Brazzaville, where disarmament was pursued with a lack of rigor at certain stages, the parties returned to armed conflict. Further, many parties in disarmament initiatives have included ‘spoilers’ with little or no commitment to giving up arms.

## 2.10 Balancing security and development priorities

The development component of DDR (reintegration) has tended to be relatively short-term and under-resourced. There tends to be a disjunction between the ‘security’ phase of DDR (disarmament/demobilisation) implemented primarily by the military and well-funded, and the reintegration phase funded from voluntary contributions and implemented by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and development agencies with considerably less resources. Moreover, some major development agencies are unable to fund “disarmament” – leading to difficulties in appropriately sequencing the process. Consequently, reintegration efforts have often yielded inconclusive outcomes.

### **2.11 Lack of connection with the police**

DDR programmes have frequently failed to connect sufficiently with the police and the justice sector to mitigate the problems of increasing crime levels that often follow the demobilisation of ex-combatants. There have also been problems in terms of absorbing ex-combatants into the police, as in the Solomon Islands or Haiti, as ex-combatants do not necessarily make suitable police officers.

### **2.12 Vulnerable groups**

The needs of vulnerable ex-combatant groups, such as disabled veterans, and child and women soldiers, have frequently been insufficiently addressed in DDR programmes. As a consequence, in the PCR phase their specific needs and concerns go unanswered.

### **2.13 Reconciliation issues**

DDR programmes have tended to achieve only partial success in assisting in reconciling ex-combatants with communities to which they are returning. Reconciliation remains inherently problematic when ex-combatants have committed atrocities in their own communities and are seen as 'part of the problem' by many civilians. Further, 'segregated settlement' of ex-combatants in communities has sometimes hampered reconciliation. However, reconciliation has not necessarily been seen as a DDR programme priority.

## **3. Could links with SALW programmes help address some of these shortfalls?**

Though an integrated array of measures are required to address the above-mentioned problems, SALW programmes can be helpful in several key areas. SALW programmes can address gaps in DDR programming. They can particularly contribute in relation to efforts to: develop and strengthen national and regional arms collection and control initiatives targeted at weapons holders that have not been disarmed or reintegrated under DDR. These can also help to strengthen links between immediate post-conflict disarmament efforts and longer-term weapons reduction and control as part of peace and community-building and development efforts. SALW and related programming can potentially make contributions in a number of areas discussed below.

### **3.1 Follow-up on DDR arms collection shortfalls**

SALW programmes can be phased to cover arms collection shortfalls during and after DDR initiatives. In particular, they have the capacity to target armed groups and individuals that tend to fall outside the DDR process. They can also engage with ex-combatants who have failed to register in formal DDR processes. In this sense, SALW programmes usefully complement, as well as offering follow up, to DDR. Armed groups and civilians also often require different approaches to that of ex-combatants who are frequently under centralised control and are more likely to give up arms if ordered to do so by leaderships. Armed groups, such as militia and civil defence forces, may require a more incentive-based, and participatory, voluntary weapons collection approach.

Weapons for development programmes have the capacity to link arms collection with longer-term and sustainable community development objectives that are not fully prioritised in DDR programmes. These, for example, have offered community-based development or community-building programmes (such as building of water wells, schools, health centres or community centres) in association with the voluntary hand-in of weapons by civilians. Weapons for development programmes may also include ex-combatants who, for various reasons, have not registered in formal DDR-based disarmament or who have returned to civilian communities. In Sierra Leone, for example, combatants who opted out of reintegration benefits to fight in other conflicts in West Africa may have to go through weapons for development programmes as the Government of Sierra Leone has made it clear that they will receive no reintegration benefits as they have ‘missed the boat’ by not registering in formal DDR initiatives which have now concluded. The UNDP Arms for Development Programme (CACDII) in Sierra Leone has sought to follow-on from DDR programmes to reduce feelings of insecurity and strengthen community development through further weapons collection and establishment of weapons-free communities. Participating chiefdoms are provided with US \$20,000 and expertise to use on projects identified through community discussion and agreement.

### **Box 2: Post-conflict community reintegration in Sierra Leone**

A good example of a programme that has addressed shortfalls in DDR programming is the Community Reintegration Programme (CRP) supported by DFID in Sierra Leone. As part of this programme, a number of ex-combatants are working with local communities in joint agricultural initiatives and also taking part in joint skills training. During the formal DDR programme in Sierra Leone that ended in January 2002, a number of ex-combatants had still to reintegrate into communities despite transitional allowances. Along with GTZ’s React Programme, which adopted a community reintegration approach, the CRP has made significant strides in averting ex-combatants contemplating re-arming or becoming engaged in criminality.

Weapons-for-livelihoods programmes can be further useful entry points in demilitarising communities and creating livelihoods for groups who have legitimate reasons for weapons possession. For example, hunters have used their weapons in conflict as well as for livelihood purposes. Following conflict, they may still require their weapons for livelihood purposes but their continued possession of weapons poses a potential threat to communities. Retraining in, for example, fishing skills, and the provision of nets and equipment in exchange for their weapons can provide an incentive for the handing in of weapons. Pastoralists who require guns for curbing predators of livestock may need to be offered similar schemes. In the immediate post-conflict environment, DDR has not tended to prioritise these activities, as persuading the warring parties to stop fighting has been the immediate priority rather than dealing with armed groups.

### **3.2 Stockpile management**

SALW programmes can complement efforts to improve DDR stockpile management by strengthening security over authorised stocks of arms country-wide, as well as by introducing rigorous procedures and management of stockpiles, and also proper weapons destruction procedures when required.



### **3.3 Confidence-building including weapons-free zones**

SALW programmes can be phased to address confidence-building shortfalls and insecurity during DDR initiatives. A key weakness of DDR has sometimes been its inability to bear down on weapons possession and display across society, thus creating incentives to retain and use arms. SALW programmes (as in the gun-free-zones established in South Africa and the Solomon Islands) can build confidence by creating weapons-free zones in communities and issuing certificates to confirm this. Even if some weapons are secretly retained, they are hidden and become less available. This not only creates local confidence it can also serve as an entry point for wider donor engagement by creating a more secure environment within which PCR can take place.

#### **Box 3: Arms caches, the police and regional cooperation: Mozambique**

A key difficulty in the DDR process undertaken in Mozambique (1992-94), was that the government and the rebel RENAMO movement, as well as individual combatants, secretly established arms caches outside the disarmament process. Arms caches in Mozambique (as well as Swaziland and Zimbabwe) have fuelled crime, regional arms trafficking and armed criminality in South Africa's cities. However, regional cooperation, particularly through South African technical assistance and cooperation with the Mozambican police, and SADC, has contributed to the uncovering of caches and the destruction of weapons that would otherwise have fuelled crime in the region. In the latest phase of Operation Rachel the information on arms caches was collected by the Mozambican police. Building the capacity of the police and regional cooperation is essential both to tackling specific problems of arms caches and to broader PCR and governance goals.

### **3.4 Engaging the police in arms collection and community security**

The police can make a major contribution to dealing with DDR civilian weapons shortfalls. Retraining the police in community policing is frequently undertaken as part of security-sector reform (SSR) in PCR. The thorny issue of civilian disarmament, which has usually been bypassed in DDR programmes, can be implemented and monitored by the police rather than the military as part of SALW programmes. Further, SALW programmes can provide an important entry point for police re-training and improved police-community relations.

### **3.5 Addressing regional arms flows**

SALW programming can help to address the problem of regional arms flows undermining disarmament undertaken during DDR initiatives. Measures including training and strengthening customs, border police, and cross border commissions, have been important elements of SALW programming, as well as building up supporting infrastructure.

### **3.6 Sensitisation and social mobilisation against SALW possession**

SALW programming can add to the effectiveness of DDR by seeking to change attitudes to SALW possession, which often remains largely unaffected by DDR programmes that have tended to target immediate weapons collection priorities rather than attitudes. This type of programming should ideally be phased in at an early stage of DDR. One approach that can be drawn upon is sensitisation and social

mobilisation against SALW possession. This has been done through educational programmes, the use of theatre, dance, the media, and other mediums. Special groups, particularly the young, who have been left out of DDR programming may be persuaded to forgo the perceived attractions of guns and criminal activity through education and training.

### **3.7 Conflict prevention/dispute mechanisms to facilitate weapons reduction**

Establishing local conflict prevention and dispute mechanisms is a SALW programme technique that may be particularly useful to facilitate weapons handovers in areas where arms are, in part, a means of protecting livelihoods, such as in Northern Kenya or the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. In Kenya, for example, peace and development committees have had a role to play in this area. Further, SALW programmes are in a better position to address reconciliation issues than DDR programmes which tend to cut off at the point of short-term reintegration of ex-combatants into communities.

### **3.8 Vulnerable groups**

SALW programmes can play an important role in efforts to address the long-term needs of groups such as child soldiers and women combatants who may have special needs in terms of DDR. Women combatants will need to be safeguarded against rape in demobilisation centres, for example, and they may face particular problems in seeking to reintegrate. DDR processes tend to kick-start the reintegration of child soldiers, for example, with short-term programming that may only last a year or so, but which require further follow-up if they are to be sustainable.

## **4. How can SALW and DDR programming be better phased and integrated?**

DDR and SALW programmes have tended to be phased separately. DDR programmes have usually been set up as part of ceasefire arrangements involving the parties to the conflict and external bodies, such as the UN, who are engaged in PCR. As a consequence, they have often been informed by relatively short-term security and political considerations, in particular preventing further fighting between warring parties. SALW programmes have tended to be follow-up initiatives that often address areas which DDR has failed to take on or have not fully followed through. DDR programmes themselves have had phasing difficulties with the components of DDR being sometimes insufficiently connected. Recently, there has been a greater awareness of the need to coordinate and link SALW and DDR. However, the opportunities have still not been fully realised. This might be realised in organisational terms by measures such as:

- Joint planning and coordination mechanisms between SALW and DDR programming.
- The early integration of SALW programming into DDR initiatives. For example, civilian arms collection programmes could be written into DDR mandates.
- Training for those working on SALW and DDR to improve their understandings of the two types of programming.

- ❑ More research into the connections between DDR and SALW and how they can be integrated.
- ❑ Factoring SALW/DDR issues into conflict assessments prior to the initiation of programming.
- ❑ Engaging a wider audience of donors, INGOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and national governments in SALW and DDR issues.

Above all, both DDR and SALW programmes need to be continually coordinated with other aspects of PCR, and the links between them used to facilitate effective transitions to longer-term peace-building and development efforts. Links with SSR are particularly important as a reformed police force, for example, can play an extremely important role in consolidating civilian disarmament and a reformed national army can help build confidence in communities and forestall future resorts to SALW.

## **5. Recommendations**

To fully realise the operational opportunities inherent in linking DDR and SALW programming an increased emphasis on the following might be considered in policy and programming terms.

- ❑ A greater emphasis should be placed on sensitisation and community mobilisation against SALW possession. This should be undertaken early in DDR initiatives. Such measures have the capacity to avert subsequent post-conflict criminality and violence.
- ❑ Civilian weapons collection should be written into DDR agreements, rather than be viewed as a post-DDR activity.
- ❑ Community engagement and consultation should be a feature of DDR and SALW planning. This should include consultation in the design and implementation of DDR in particular which has frequently addressed perceived combatant needs rather than those of the whole community.
- ❑ Confidence-building should be prioritised in DDR and SALW programming in the PCR phase. Poor weapons collection often leads to a highly insecure PCR environment. Confidence-building needs to be reinforced at the community level by measures such as weapons-free-zones/communities which have the capacity to create space for development to take place. The police also need to be involved in maintaining low levels of SALW once peacekeepers leave and the formal DDR process is over.
- ❑ DDR and SALW should be linked into longer-term national gun legislation both nationally and regionally.
- ❑ The reintegration element of DDR should be placed on a similar footing to disarmament and demobilisation in terms of funding. Further, it should be designed to be more long-term and sustainable.

If you wish to consult further about the relevance of SALW-related programmes to development strategies with which you are concerned, contact the SALW team at CHAD:

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