

The Struggle after Combat

The Role of NGOs
in DDR Processes:
Synthesis Study

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2008

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Part of the study 'The struggle after combat'
Commissioned by Cordaid

Disclaimer

This study was commissioned by Cordaid and executed by five researchers. The views and analysis put forward in this report are entirely those of the authors in their private or professional capacity and should not be attributed to Cordaid, the involved research institutions or any agencies or persons interviewed during this study.

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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those people in Afghanistan, the DRC, Sierra Leone and elsewhere who shared their experiences and knowledge with us. We also acknowledge the help of numerous people in the three countries who provided logistical support, translated interviews, arranged meetings and so on. We thank Cordaid for commissioning this study. We received valuable comments from Paul van den Berg, Kees van den Broek, Lia van Broekhoven, Henny van der Graaf, Peter Konijn, Bert van Ruitenbeek, and Irma Specht. Credits for textual editing are due to Carol Stennes.

1 Introduction

There has been a dramatic rise in the past twenty years of comprehensive programmes aimed at the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) in countries trying to recover from war. It has come to be well-recognised that effective DDR is crucial for building durable peace and preventing a relapse into conflict. It has also become clear that DDR is difficult and that it is intertwined with other war to peace transitions, such as establishing security and legitimate governance, rehabilitation, the return of refugees, economic recovery, and transitional justice.

Aim and relevance

Academic and policy-oriented analysis of DDR has also grown in recent years. Many experiences, outcomes, shortcomings and lessons learned with regard to DDR have been documented. The bulk of these efforts have focused on the required context and the desired design of DDR as well as on specific issues and target groups. Building on numerous policy papers of the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and bilateral donor agencies, the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) have emerged as the dominant, comprehensive framework for DDR. However, these standards have not yet been applied to recent and present DDR processes. These detailed guidelines and the papers that preceded them acknowledge the crucial role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).¹ Policies and academic publications do not go much beyond that basic recognition, however. NGOs are either identified as useful implementing agents or as valuable representatives of society.

The wider literature on developmental and humanitarian practice spells out that it is a mistake to view NGOs as mere executors of donor-funded projects. Particularly in countries emerging from war, civil society dynamics and ‘development politics’ tend to be complicated. The lack of strong local agencies and the massive influx of foreign NGOs and other actors often compound an already complex transition. The NGO scene thus becomes interrelated with pre-existing processes and problems, while adding its own dynamics and dilemmas.

This is why Cordaid, a Dutch multi-mandate NGO that works with partner organisations across the globe, has commissioned a study into this area of relative analytical neglect: the role of NGOs in DDR processes. The project is a continuation of Cordaid’s efforts to explore the interface between political, military and development actors in contemporary efforts to overcome armed conflict and to consider reconfiguring its role as an NGO in relation to military interventions and state-building efforts.²

The present study aims to assist Cordaid in developing its views and policy in relation to DDR by informing it about the theoretical underpinnings of DDR and about the role of NGOs – including Cordaid’s partners – in DDR processes in the field. More broadly, the study aims to inform a wider audience of academics, policymakers and practitioners about the activities, strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in DDR processes. In line with this, it aims to examine how NGOs can collaborate with parties that normally play a leading role in DDR processes, such as the military and UN agencies.

The main research question of this study is thus: what is the role of NGOs – and Cordaid’s partners in particular – in DDR processes in relation to military and other actors involved with such processes?

¹ More specifically, the IDDRS stipulate that ‘NGOs often provide expertise in specific areas and can be a significant actor in ensuring that the needs of the community are met. The NGOs should be collaborated with and consulted with throughout the DDR process.’ (sic) (United Nations 2006)

² The preceding analysis of civil-military relations in Afghanistan and Liberia executed for Cordaid may be of relevance here: Frerks et al. (2006).

Case selection

Three case studies were carried out for this study: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone. This report synthesizes the findings of these case studies, puts them in broader context and draws wider conclusions and lessons.

Clearly, there is no pretence that the three cases selected are a representative sample. They are an interesting sample, however, for the following reasons. Firstly, the three cases are geographically diverse and include three of the most conflict-ridden regions of the world: Central Africa, South and Central Asia and West Africa. Secondly, all three cases represent highly complex and challenging environments. The three countries suffered (or still suffer) from protracted conflicts with several failed attempts at resolution, a large number of internationally connected armed groups, and a thriving war economy. All three conflicts created a massive humanitarian crisis. Thirdly, there are differences with regard to the military intervention in the three countries. Sierra Leone was stabilised by a large multi-mandate UN mission, regional (ECOWAS³) troops and an intervention by the United Kingdom (UK). The DRC hosts an even larger UN mission, but it is small compared to the size of the country. Afghanistan undergoes both a UN mandated NATO⁴ operation and ongoing military operations led by the United States (US). Fourthly, they are at different stages of implementation: DDR in Sierra Leone was completed in 2004, Afghanistan underwent a limited DDR process (for the Northern Alliance only) and is struggling to deal with more challenging groups (through the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups, DIAG) and DDR in the DRC is still very much in progress. Similarly, Afghanistan and the DRC continue to suffer from violent conflict in parts of the country, while Sierra Leone has become relatively stable.

Methodology and biases

This report draws on the three case study reports (Douma et al. 2008; Frerks et al. 2008; and Klem et al. 2008) as well as a review of academic and policy literature. The case studies drew on in-country fieldwork consisting of interviews with a wide range of relevant actors in different regions as well as country-specific publications. Each study comprised three or four researchers jointly spending between eight weeks (DRC and Sierra Leone) and four months (Afghanistan) in the country.

The methodology has some limitations and possible biases. As was mentioned, the case selection can at best be taken as an 'interesting sample'. Secondly, the time available for fieldwork was limited and did not allow for surveys, elaborate household interviewing and so on. Thirdly, research in a war-ridden country is inhibited by political sensitivities, taboos, security issues, and troubled access. The use of interpreters, limited visits to non-urban areas and the exclusively male research team may have produced specific biases as well.

Set-up of this report

This report starts off with a review of global debates and policy on DDR (section 2). As this document aims to inform various audiences about these processes, we discuss the ins and outs of DDR in relative detail. Section 3 discusses issues related to civil society in conflict and post-conflict countries. Subsequently, this synthesis reviews the main tenets of the DDR processes in Afghanistan, the DRC and Sierra Leone (section 4). Section 5 zooms in on the contribution NGOs have made to these processes. A more generic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in relation to DDR follows in section 6. Conclusions are drawn in section 7.

³ ECOWAS stands for Economic Community of West African States.

⁴ NATO stands for North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

2 Putting DDR on the map

Contemporary conflicts are typically intra-state conflicts concerning struggles over state control or insurgencies against the state. They involve a wide range of state and non-state actors and commonly have trans-border, regional or even global dimensions. Their causal background is multidimensional and often involves tensions around identity groups (including ethnic ones); a failure of legitimate or effective governance; discriminatory politics; widespread poverty and socio-economic inequality between constituent groups; war economies thriving on the capture and trade of natural resources; and easy access to small arms and light weapons (see among many others: Gurr 1970; Ramsbothan et al. 2005; Berdal and Malone 2000; Crocker et al. 2001). The humanitarian consequences and wider economic and political costs tend to be tremendous. Contemporary conflicts are often protracted in nature and attempts to build peace are frequently undone by renewed hostilities and escalations of violence. This is due to many factors, but one of them concerns the fact that violent conflicts leave a legacy of armed ex-fighters. They tend to be numerous and spread over an array of rebel groups and state armies. Though these armed groupings are essentially a consequence (rather than a cause) of the war, once created they often continue to be a source of instability. Numerous authors have underlined that the *organisation* of violence is a vital explanatory factor in contemporary conflicts (Tilly 1985; Brass 2003; Richards 2005). These analyses highlight the pivotal role of armed groups. The order installed during a peace process is often under continuous pressure due to societal grievances or destabilising activities of conflict entrepreneurs, and large reserves of arms and ex-fighters can provide the powder keg. It is for this reason that DDR has come forward as a crucial component in overcoming contemporary conflicts and consolidating post-conflict peace arrangements.

Defining DDR

Three basic phases are distinguished in the transition from being a member of an armed group to a civilian: disarmament (removing the weapons), demobilisation (discharging combatants from their units) and reintegration (the socio-economic process of becoming a civilian). Box 1 below discusses the definition of these terms in more detail.

Box 1: Definition of DDR

The following definitions are taken from the IDDRS (United Nations 2006):

Disarmament: is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.

Demobilisation: is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation encompasses the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion. Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. Reintegration: is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.

The acronym DDR is often expanded with more Rs, because the three terms it covers are considered too limited. An R may be added for 'reinsertion', which (as mentioned in box 1) refers to the transitional stop-gap measures to help ex-combatants overcome the time lag that commonly occurs between demobilisation and reintegration. An R may also be added for resettlement or repatriation, when ex-combatants need to be returned to their home area or a home country. Finally, sometimes an R is added for rehabilitation, which is a more encompassing process than reintegration, as it concerns the wider societal struggle of ex-combatants and other community members to re-establish a normal life with shelter, income, basic facilities, services and so on.

This basic presentation of DDR suggests it engenders a phased, sequential process. Though this is often the case, it is not a necessity (e.g. Specht 2003; Ozerdem 2002; IPA 2002). At first glance it may seem conditional for reintegration that an ex-combatant is disarmed and demobilised, but the opposite may also be true: fighters may only want to hand in their gun and dismantle their groups once they have gradually resumed civilian life. In other cases, combatants have never really *dis-integrated* from civilian life, because they stayed with their communities in between military activity. D, D and R may thus occur in parallel or reverse order. It may even be cyclical when combatants rearm and remobilise and disarm and demobilise in a later stage once more, though DDR programmes generally block ex-combatants who have already enrolled for benefits earlier.

The coming of age of DDR

Throughout human history, societies have expectably dealt with excess arms and ex-combatants in the aftermath of armed conflict. Little has been written about these DDR processes *avant la lettre*, however. It was only in the late 1980s that the term DDR was coined and dedicated efforts were made towards a comprehensive programme for ex-combatants. Reference has been made to strategies aimed at downsizing regular armies at the end of the Cold War, particularly in Europe (GTZ 2001). The bulk of attention has gone to domestic or UN-led DDR efforts that took place after an intra-state conflict. Pioneer programmes were administrated by UN peacekeepers in Central America (ONUCA, 1989-1992), Namibia (UNTAG, 1989-1990) and Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992-1993) (Muggah 2005).

In the wake of these operations, DDR became a common appearance in wider policy documents. The UN 'Agenda for Peace' (1992) mentions the need for "disarming the previously warring parties", but does not discuss demobilisation and reintegration. Meanwhile, organisations within and around the UN family – such as UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – started to develop policy and practice as well. The World Bank came to see post-conflict stabilisation as its priority and started to fund demobilisation and reintegration programmes in course of the 1990s. Bilateral donors began to develop their views as well. The operational and policy efforts of the *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) and the Swedish Initiative for DDR (SIDDR) are relevant efforts in this regard (GTZ 2001; SIDDR 2006). Likewise, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) discussed how best to support demobilisation and reintegration in its broader guidelines on conflict, peace and development cooperation in 1997 (OECD/DAC 1997). More recently, it presented a handbook on Security System Reform (SSR), which discusses the various linkages to DDR as well (OECD/DAC 2007).

Within the UN framework, DDR policies were consolidated around the turn of the century. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan labelled DDR as a priority for post-conflict peace building in 1998 (United Nations 1998). The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) went into more detail when it published its principles and guidelines on DDR in 1999. In the subsequent year, the UN Secretary General briefed the Security Council with a report titled 'The Role of the United Nations Peacekeeping in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration'. Confirming this trend, the authoritative Brahimi report underlined

the importance of DDR and made specific recommendations about planning, financing and organising it (United Nations 2000). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), created in 1998, incorporated the wider UN family and other development actors and took a broader perspective on post-conflict reintegration. Led by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the IASC put forward ‘ten golden rules’ on reintegration of both demobilised ex-combatants and displaced and traumatised people (IASC 2001: 1).

Meanwhile, underage and female combatants received special attention. In 1997, UNICEF and a number of NGOs adopted the Cape Town Principles, which were entirely geared to preventing child recruitment and enhancing the demobilisation and reintegration into society of those already incorporated into an armed group. The principles called upon governments and other parties to armed conflict to take the necessary action (Cape Town Principles 1997). In 2007, UNICEF and its partners reviewed and updated these principles in Paris together with a number of the countries concerned: the Cape Town Principles were thus replaced by the Paris Principles (Paris Principles 2007). In 2000, resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council highlighted the importance of a gender perspective and encouraged “all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents” (UN Security Council 2000).

DDR thus became a widely recognised subject and it drew in a wide range of actors. It was only in 2006, however, that a more coherent, broadly supported framework emerged: the IDDRS. These comprehensive guidelines engender the UN approach to DDR and discuss definitions, stakeholders, different aspects of planning, a range of operational interventions and relevant cross-cutting issues related to DDR. The standards have silenced some of the earlier complaints about lack of strategy, coherence and consensus. On the other hand, as the new UN orthodoxy emerged, new criticism also came forward. To mention some examples, this includes the criticism that the IDDRS falsely assume that a centralised approach with cantonment sites is both feasible and desirable (Faltas 2004⁵), the lack of sensitivity to failed state contexts (Schramek 2003), and the lack of flexibility of overly centralised approaches to local diversities, needs and opportunities (Pouligny 2004). In some ways, this criticism seems premature, however, as the strengths and weaknesses of the IDDRS have yet to be observed when the framework is applied in practice.

Defining success

An attempt to assess the track record of DDR inevitably raises the question what DDR is supposed to accomplish. There are in fact different perspectives on DDR, encompassing different objectives and levels of ambition (Baare n.d.; Muggah 2005; Kingma 2000; Schramek 2003; GTZ 2001). Drawing on these authors, we structure these perspectives in three clusters, which can be placed on a continuum and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Firstly, the spoiler contingency perspective focuses on the short-term pacification of ex-combatants. From this security or military perspective, DDR should prioritise those ex-combatants who are most likely to undermine the peace. Non-combatants associated with factions and combatants perceived to be less threatening to stability (possibly women and children) are of lesser concern. In this line of thinking, DDR should not be over-burdened with too many ambitions and principles that would dilute its core objective – military de-escalation – and disarmament and demobilisation receive greater emphasis than

⁵ *The advantages of working with cantonment sites are: services are easier to provide, greater control over target group, opportunities for re-orientation, and the symbolic value and confidence building that such camps can imbibe. The disadvantages include that reintegration takes place outside the camp, ex-combatants may not want to join the camp, a potential lack of resources to run such cantonment sites and the possible adverse security effects of piling up ex-combatants in one place (Faltas 2004).*

sustained reintegration. Measures of success tend to focus on the numbers processed (weapons collected and destroyed, number of ex-combatants demobilised and given reintegration training) and the overall level of stability.

The other two perspectives, in contrast, relate more strongly to developmental issues. A transitional perspective emphasises the reintegration of ex-combatants. It takes the longer-term social and economic position of people who used to be associated with armed factions, rather than immediate stability, as a measure of success. Apart from individual reintegration, it underlines the demise of some networks (breaking the structures of factions) and the rise of others (social capital, reconciliation, economic ties).

A transformational perspective, thirdly, goes a step further and scrutinises the success of a DDR programme in tackling the root causes of a conflict. Short-term reintegration of ex-combatants without resolving the underlying factors that caused them to take up arms may result in the reproduction of pre-existing grievances and inequalities and will thus sustain a breeding ground for renewed violence. Human security, human development and a just society are the ultimate measures of success from this perspective.

On a different note, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) has specified four different motivations behind DDR, which also imply divergent measures of success. Combatants may 1) simply deserve assistance from a humanitarian point of view or 2) because they have sacrificed themselves for their communities. 3) Alternatively, it is rational to support them because of their potential contribution to development or 4) to prevent them from endangering the fragile peace (Kingma 2001). The first two imply an intrinsic good in assisting ex-combatants; the latter take a broader view and could be related to the spoiler contingency, transitional and transformational perspectives above.

Defining DDR success is thus not straightforward. Particularly with a transitional or transformational view, this is further complicated by the fact that the effects aimed for are hard to pin down: how to assess veritable reintegration or the extent to which DDR contributes to addressing root causes? Also, it is difficult to attribute positive changes to DDR interventions due to the frenzy of interventions and processes in a post-conflict context. Basic statistics about the number of weapons collected and the number of people processed in reintegration programmes continue to be the backbone of many monitoring reports and evaluations. In some of the cases, tracer studies and more comprehensive impact evaluation have been carried out.

Nonetheless, assessments of success and failures of DDR programmes in the past twenty years have been somewhat inconclusive. There are clear negative examples – such as Angola's initial DDR process, which helped set off a return to war – but typically the DDR process is only one among the many factors that contributed to failure. Outright successes are rare, but Mozambique, Cambodia and Mali have been suggested as positive examples. However, all DDR processes exhibit shortcomings as well as relative success (UNOSAA 2005).

Main issues and controversies

DDR processes are typically rather comprehensive programmes in difficult contexts, aimed at complex transitions that interact with a wide range of other processes. Unsurprisingly, there is a vast number of issues that require attention in relation to DDR. Though the IDDRS touch on most of these issues, some of the dilemmas and controversies remain unresolved in the practical application at field level, as discussed below.

As indicated earlier, war to peace transitions usually involve a welter of inter-related changes in the political, military, social and economic spheres. This necessitates an approach that integrates interventions in these different realms. It is widely accepted that DDR is a cart rather than a horse within this approach. That is, political will from the parties concerned and some level of security and stability are a prerequisite for DDR to succeed. DDR cannot drive military and political change; it can, however, contribute to a consolidation of security and legitimate state-building if some elementary conditions are in place.

On the other hand, many of the desired transitions in the security, political, or socio-economic sphere partly depend on DDR for their success. The reintegration of ex-combatants can be a stepping stone for further economic development, reconciliation and social inclusion. Similarly, the amelioration of the state security system may face severe obstacles without adequate DDR. Expecting DDR to be fully compatible with all these processes may result in over-burdening of the programme, however. Clearly, there are trade-offs between shorter-term, quick wins and longer-term, wider transformations, as also became clear from the three perspectives posited above. Below, we discuss some of the demarcations and interfaces of DDR in relation to the wider security, political, economic and social spheres.

Security aspects. DDR merely separates combatants from their weapons and aims to reintegrate them in society. It does not usually deal with the wider arms market and the weapons available to communities. Often, however, DDR is complemented by programmes aimed at the reduction of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in society at large. On the demand side, these programmes tend to focus on awareness raising and a wider improvement of security. Such efforts often struggle with entrenched obstacles such as a traditional gun culture, the symbolic (masculine) value attached to weapons or legitimate security concerns: in some parts of the world, it is understandable that people prefer to 'stick to their guns' (Small Arms Survey 2006). This underlines the importance of a well-functioning security sector, discussed below. On the supply side, SALW programmes aim to reduce the number of weapons through coercion (gun law and the security sector enforcing it) by offering incentives and by curbing the influx of weapons from abroad. Unlike most DDR programmes, these incentives are typically aimed at communities rather than individuals. SALW projects provide public facilities to communities that hand in their weapons. Some observers have suggested that DDR programmes should take a similar approach. The feasibility of such a strategy will depend on the extent to which intra-community pressure succeeds in persuading those holding arms to hand them in. Traditionally, a DDR programme offers individual financial or other benefits to ex-combatants in return for weapons. This creates numerous potential problems as well. It may reinforce patronage systems when militia leaders distribute weapons to relatives or affiliates for them to gain to access DDR perks. Also, DDR incentives may stimulate the weapons market and attract new arm flows, especially when benefits are in cash rather than in kind and when the price offered is too high (Baare n.d. 18; Kingma 2001).

DDR itself does not aim to set up structures that provide protection and a rule of law, but as is the case with SALW, it is closely related to SSR. The state is normally assumed to be the key actor in providing security. Well-functioning police, army and justice sectors are therefore essential for enhanced safety and stability, which in turn are often a condition for fighters to lay down their weapons. Creating such institutions often takes much longer than DDR programmes last, however. There tends to be some overlap between DDR and SSR, because the former generates part of the labour force for the latter: in a number of cases ex-combatants ended up working as soldiers, policemen, or guards, either for the state or with private security firms. Often, however, there are problems with the quality (too low) or quantity (too high) of these ex-combatants. Also, institutional structures and legitimate control over the security system tend to be weak, while the obstacles – lack of resources, persisting loyalty structures, continuation of the war economy – are vast. In countries emerging from conflict, the security system is often itself a threat to human security.

Political aspects. The readiness of the warring parties to comply with the programme is one of the most important prerequisites for successful DDR. No matter how well a DDR programme is designed, the benefits will never be a substitute for political will. An adequate arrangement for ex-combatants and attractive scenario for their commanders can help consolidate their willingness, but is by no means the only factor. Sustained support from factions is often contingent on the political (and economic) power they acquire in post-war positions. The transition of rebel movements into a democratic political force is a formidable challenge. DDR can contribute to part of that transition, but without a range of other changes (political leadership, elections, quality of the media and civil society, public transparency and accountability and so on), there is a great risk of sacrificing durable peace for quick wins. Offering warlords ministerial positions may help de-escalate an emergency situation, but tends to undermine the wider legitimacy and stability of the system. Similarly, there may be tensions between DDR on the one hand and transitional justice and truth commissions on the other (Kingma 2001). Particularly when one takes a transformational perspective on DDR, issues like impunity need to be addressed. Likewise, a reform of the state itself is commonly an essential ingredient of tackling the deeper political causes of violent conflict, but it is well beyond the reach of a DDR programme.

DDR programmes themselves are likely to generate political dynamics as well. They involve large amounts of resources and require significant executive and administrative capacities. The latter are usually limited and the former have an aggravating effect: a DDR bonanza potentially induces thriving corruption and patronage-based manipulation. On the other hand, despite its common weaknesses in war-torn countries, there seems to be no adequate substitute for the state. Foreign actors often lack the mandate or political legitimacy, the contextual knowledge, the logistical capacity, and the enduring presence to take full responsibility for a DDR programme. The IDDRS and other policy documents also advocate ownership: national actors should take a leading role, while international actors and civil society should advise, fund, monitor, strengthen state capacity or implement parts of the overall programme (e.g. United Nations 2006; SIDDR 2006).

Economic aspects. Creating possibilities for income generation is vital to the successful re-integration of ex-combatants; their daily survival and societal pride depend on it. In many post-conflict countries, the productive economy is flat on its back. Economic assets have been damaged, destroyed or pillaged, while human resources and social capital have suffered from death, injury and displacement. Ex-combatants are one group among many that struggle for livelihoods. Thus the provision of economic assets or employment through a DDR framework inevitably invites social and political tensions as well. Economic needs and challenges surpass the objectives and abilities of a DDR programme. Sustained economic recovery and income for ex-combatants will require other, and more enduring, interventions than DDR can normally offer. Meanwhile, DDR has to grapple with the immediate economic issues and day-to-day survival of its target group. Long- and short-term interests thus need to be balanced and a sequence of different economic interventions is normally required.

Immediate reinsertion aid often concerns intensive labour projects. Ex-combatants (sometimes along with other people) get paid for construction work on houses, roads, bridges, schools and so on. Ideally this has the triple objective of 1) providing some money to the ex-combatants which subsequently enters the local economy, 2) fostering acceptance of ex-fighters by communities, and 3) contributing to infrastructural reconstruction. In other cases, ex-combatants have simply been provided with a stipend (which they do not always spend wisely) or aid in kind while waiting for reintegration activities to start. Reinsertion aid is not intended to be sustainable; it is a stop-gap measure. However, it can have longer-term negative legacies, for example, when stipends create dependency or jealousy or when the infrastructural work done is below standard.

The subsequent step – economic reintegration – ideally requires an analysis of the post-war socio-economic context of a given country, including an assessment of labour market opportunities. After all,

it makes little sense to train and equip ex-combatants for a job that will not actually earn them money. Opportunities offered through DDR often include agriculture, micro-enterprise (e.g. small shops), and vocational jobs (tailors, cooks, drivers, carpenters and so on). Typically, the first sector can absorb more labour than the last one, but the personal preferences and ambitions of ex-combatants may be the other way round. Vocational training also raises questions around the ability of a DDR programme to get ex-combatants ready. Can they compete with other tailors, cooks, etc., with only a few months of training and a start-up kit? In the absence of additional guidance, such programmes may deliver no better results than intensive labour projects: they offer temporary benefits, but no sustainable results. Apprenticeships and job creation programmes with existing craftsmen and businessmen are a common additional intervention.

When handled inadequately, economic reintegration may result in market distortions, frustrations, tension, renewed recruitment and resumed violence. With adequate economic assessments, proper training, follow-up guidance and exploitation of the skills that ex-fighters have, better results may be achieved. Often (not always) ex-combatants are young and physically strong and they are used to work in disciplinary, hierarchical structures (Specht 2003). Some have also had work experience prior to or alongside their military life, which they can capitalise on after the war.

The above-discussed programmatic prescriptions leave untouched a number of contextual, structural obstacles to the creation of livelihoods (Brem and Geraci 2000; Kingma 2001). The lack of land ownership, for example, may impede agricultural income generation (Baare n.d.). Lack of stable markets for agricultural or other economic products and weak economic institutions are also a challenge. Exclusivist or exploitative social structures – e.g. along lines of ethnicity or age or as a part of neo-patrimonial dynamics – may also hamper the job opportunities of certain groups. Many of these challenges are well beyond the means and the time frame of a DDR programme. Land reform and reinvigoration of the economy's productive sector need to be dealt with in a later stage. Micro-finance (Body 2005) – in 'normal' poverty situations a common and more sustainable alternative for vocational training or job creation – is ambitious with a DDR framework, because it requires certain skills, attitudes and community structures as well as relatively intensive guidance and monitoring to be sustainable.

Social aspects. The social aspects of the re-integration of ex-combatants hinge, on the one hand, on their ability to function in society, and on whether society is willing and able to accommodate them on the other. At an individual level, reference is commonly made to psychological challenges in relation to self-images and overcoming traumatic experiences. Caution must be exercised not to use interpretations and approaches inspired by Western discourse. "As has been argued by some psychiatrists, it makes little sense to speak of trauma, in the psychiatric or diagnostic sense, outside precise historical, cultural and social contexts." (Pouligny 2004:10; see also Specht 2003: 93-94) Dealing adequately with spouses, bush-wives and children in their new context may also pose a challenge for ex-combatants. Physical health problems, including HIV/AIDS, may exist as well.

At a relational level, the question arises what community ex-combatants are meant to reintegrate into. For some of them, home may be gone because their village no longer exists. Some may not be able to return, while others fear reprisals or enmity from their former community members. Though some fighters may be seen as legitimate or heroic, many are also despised because of atrocities committed. It is not exceptional that combatants struggle with a legacy of killing, maiming, and raping their own family or community members and destroying their own villages. Overcoming the resulting social ruptures is obviously a major challenge. The need for reconciliation at different levels of society is clear, but how to reach it is much more ambiguous.

Reconciliation strengthens opportunities for reintegration, but given that DDR is geared towards ex-combatants, it may actually have adverse effects. In fact, it is fundamentally unfair as it rewards people

who have weapons, rather than their victims. Many non-combatants may be displaced, poverty-stricken or otherwise struggling for survival. Cash, goods, and training provided to ex-combatants may thus easily invoke jealousy and resentment and deepen rifts in the community. Inflated expectations, rumours, and misunderstandings about the aims and set-up of DDR may further aggravate these dynamics. Adequate awareness raising among the public is thus important.

Eligibility: who is entitled to DDR assistance?

DDR programmes tend to involve significant financial and other benefits in an extremely poor context. As a result, local populations are often easily tempted to queue up for these opportunities. Clear demarcation of the target group is thus required to prevent a draining of the DDR budget, distorting socio-economic effects on the local situation and failure to address the core issue: armed factions. Eligibility criteria, however, are a hot issue. Who qualifies as a member of an armed faction?

There is no single, generally applicable definition of an ex-combatant. Contemporary wars typically involve asymmetric warfare and irregular groups. These include non- or semi-combat members, such as cooks, porters, spies, sex slaves and so on. They may also include cadres who are gradually drawn into the fighting: they are normally porters, but will fight if needed. Finally, many armed groups consist of part-time combatants, who are farmers for half of their time and fighters for the other half. Some of them may carry modern weapons; others may be armed with a knife or a slingshot (Pouligny 2004; Muggah 2005).

It is thus difficult to draw the line for DDR eligibility. The IDDRS stipulate that eligibility criteria for DDR need to be set separately in each case. In practice, programmes have often selected the people who handed in a weapon or – slightly more sophisticated – their ability to assemble, use and dismantle a gun. This has come under heavy criticism, however, because it falsely qualifies some people (non-cadres with a gun at home, or associates of commanders who receive a gun simply to enrol for DDR benefits) and it falsely disqualifies others (combatants who did not have a modern gun or had it taken from them, or members of the faction in non-combat positions). The IDDRS call for inclusion of all members of armed groups, thus including non-combatants. Other forms of screening (in-depth interview, triangulation with what others say) are thus called for, but these obviously have their shortcomings as well.

This brings us to the issue of special groups: underage combatants, female combatants, non-combatants associated with armed groups, disabled combatants and dependents. Clearly, these groups are not mutually exclusive. They are not special in the sense that they are exceptional – they are in fact highly common and often substantial in number – but because their needs and perspectives tend to be different from those of the stereotypical adult men with guns. Apart from eligibility, this raises programming questions: what benefits and interventions are needed to properly reintegrate them?

Underage combatants are fairly unambiguous in terms of eligibility. The legal framework that bans underage combatants is quite robust: the Optional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Convention 182 of the ILO on the worst forms of child labour. Though not always easy to verify, the criterion for underage soldiers (younger than 18) is very clear. Conventions dictate that children should not be part of armed factions in any position, so distinguishing combatants from cadres in supportive positions and their ability to present or handle a weapon is less of an issue. There is also a significant level of political attention on how to address the problem of underage soldiers. Resolution 1379 of the UN Security Council, for example, calls for child-sensitive DDR. The Coalition to stop the use of Child Soldiers, consisting of UNICEF and numerous NGOs, has been active in adopting and propagating

the Cape Town and Paris Principles, which aim to prevent recruitment and enhance their demobilisation and reintegration. The IDDRS have adopted many of these prescriptions. To name some examples: DDR programmes are to immediately separate underage combatants from the rest and tune in to their needs. Cash payments are advised against and there is to be more intense guidance. In terms of reintegration, the focus rests with family reunification and education, rather than on finding work.

Despite the legal framework and political attention, observers remain critical of DDR sensitivity to underage soldiers in practice. A conceptual flaw concerns the lack of distinction between children (anyone under 18) and youth (age category between roughly 15 and 24) (Baare n.d.:13). The IDDRS acknowledge the distinction between the two groups and suggest a tailor-made approach for youth in DDR processes. Youth differ from children in terms of the social and economic responsibilities entrusted to them. They often have their own children and are expected to earn their own income. Meanwhile, their abilities, vulnerabilities and societal position differ from those of adults as well. They need to integrate, rather than reintegrate into society, because they have no pre-war experience with responsible civilian life. The relative blindness for youth is striking in view of the vital role of youth in contemporary armed conflict (Brett and Specht 2004; Francoise and Specht: 2003; McIntyre 2003). In most of the countries concerned, youth are not a special group: they are the majority of the population. Meanwhile, many violent conflicts are driven at least in part by a youth rebellious against traditional gerontocracies and paternalistic networks that tend to marginalise youngsters (De Waal and Argenti 2002; McIntyre 2003). Youth combatants – whether recruited voluntarily or coercively – also form the backbone of numerous armies and rebel groups. They are not just an alternative to adults. “Warring parties and politicians have recognised that youth offer opportunities and capabilities that make their allegiance invaluable and their enmity dangerous.” (McIntyre 2003: 94) On a more positive note, youth have positive agency and they form a great development potential that DDR can help exploit.

It has come to be well established that **women** not only serve in supportive roles during armed conflict, but that many of them are combatants as well. Nonetheless, female fighters often miss out on DDR benefits, for example because their commanders sideline them or because DDR officers make insufficient efforts to identify and recognise them. Gendered DDR is more than just tackling this kind of discrimination, however. It also requires the inclusion of women in the design and decision-making of DDR programmes and it involves programming that is sensitive to women’s needs. This implies adequate pre-DDR assessments, the presence of female staff in DDR programmes, the separation of women from men during interviews and cantonment, attention for women’s health issues and sexual and gender-based violence, and efforts aimed at securing women’s ability to make their own choices and use DDR benefits in the way they want. Finally, a gendered approach requires a wider awareness of male and female role models and the constructs of masculinity that may contribute to violence. Support to the socialisation process, stable home environments and “alternative sources of respect” stop young men from becoming involved in armed violence (Small Arms Survey 2006; 295-321). Following UN Security Council resolution 1325, the need for a gendered approach to DDR has been acknowledged by UN agencies, the World Bank, the G8 and other key actors (e.g. Coletta 1997). Likewise, the IDDRS (United Nations 2006: OG 5.10), the UNIFEM checklist for gender dimensions of DDR (Farr 2005) and a similar checklist devised with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs pay ample attention to it, but numerous shortcomings continue to be reported about gendered DDR in practice (e.g. McKay and Mazurana 2004).

Many people – particularly women and children – are **associated with armed groups** while they do not take part in combat. These people may be porters, sex slaves or ‘bush wives’, cooks and so on. They may not pose the same threat to stability as armed combatants, but they have gone through similar experiences and face similar social and economic difficulties when reintegrating into society. This has come to be recognised in policy frameworks. The IDDRS demand that all people associated with armed groups be included in the demobilisation and reintegration component of a DDR process. Particularly when it comes to women and children, programmes are not to distinguish between combatants and

non-combatant members; in place of female fighters or child soldiers, Women Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (WAAF) and Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAF) have come to be the common terms. In practice, this may clearly be difficult, given that some rebel groups are really armed communities or maintain very close relations with them. Whole societies may thus be associated with armed groups and it is difficult to draw the line.

Injured or **disabled** members of armed groups may clearly have special needs. Amputees are a common example. Special programmes have been designed to address the social obstacles they may face as well as adequate forms of income generation.

So-called **dependents** are the associates of individual combatants. In practice, it may be difficult to accurately separate this category from the previous groups. The difference matters, however, because the IDDRS prescribe that dependents are only entitled to reintegration assistance, while the previous four groups may benefit from disarmament and/or demobilisation benefits. This may create problems: when dependents prefer to stay with their guardian, camps created for the disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants are confronted with these dependents as well.

In addition to these dilemmas about who qualifies as a DDR beneficiary, there is a need to distinguish **commanders** from the rank and file. The reintegration of commanders is vital to the success of DDR. Often efforts are made to sever their ties with foot soldiers, thus breaking the command structure of armed groups. In addition, more lucrative benefits (political power, access to state patronage, leading positions in the state army, special training programmes) are typically offered to persuade commanders to abandon their position. These opportunities tend to create a rush for the commanders list.

Mandates, institutions and collaboration

In view of the underlying rationale of DDR – reintegrating armed factions and returning the monopoly of violence to the state – a leading role is logically given to, or assumed by, the national government of the country at stake. As was discussed above, a host of foreign actors is usually involved. The UN is the primary example. Today's integrated UN missions are typically deployed with a vast mandate that includes DDR. In addition to dedicated DDR units, agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) assume roles in the process. On the donor side, the World Bank has emerged as a prominent agency, though its statutes prevent the bank from engaging in disarmament. Bilateral donors join the bank's funding frameworks or provide parallel finance. Some of the donors – mainly GTZ – provide operational assistance as well. Finally, the execution of DDR tends to be outsourced to subcontractors, foreign or local NGOs, or companies.

Adequate collaboration between all these actors has always been an issue and this has only become a more pressing concern in recent years as a result of shifting mandates and new challenges. Sophisticated frameworks and coordination mechanisms have been designed, but the catchphrase of an integrated approach has not put an end to turf battles. Tensions between UNDP and the World Bank and the bilateral donors backing them continue to be fairly common, for example. The Multi-country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), which covers most of Central Africa, put the Bank in the spotlight and highlighted the complexity of handling the relations between a Bank, national DDR commissions (with often limited capacity), different UN peacekeeping missions, UN agencies and other donors (Development Alternatives Inc 2005). Smaller DDR programmes without a peacekeeping mission – such as the one in Mali – tend to be simpler in that respect.

3 NGOs and civil society

We define civil society as a multiform entity of human relations, comprising formal and informal institutions, organisations, networks, groupings or individual actors at all levels of society that aim to protect or extend their interests, ideologies and identities. Civil society is thus situated between the state, the market and the family (Douma and Klem 2004: 2). Though the term is often used in a simpler or narrower manner, it in fact covers a large part of human society. By consequence, it makes little sense to discuss civil society at large. This study focuses on NGOs, which are a salient sub-section of civil society.

Different kinds of NGOs

An NGO is an organisation that is not part of the government. Though they often receive significant sums from government sources, they are essentially autonomous in their policies and activities. In addition, they are non-profit organisations. Typically, their activities are guided by a mandate or a charter, which is determined by the visions, ideals or interests of their constituency, that is, the people the organisation claims to represent.

The diversity within the NGO scene is vast. Different kinds of organisations have different positions, constituencies, interests and policies. There is a significant difference between international NGOs (INGOs) and national or local NGOs, specifically in terms of financial sources, human and logistical capacity and interventions scope. NGOs can further be categorised along functional lines. In this study we distinguish the following groups.

- a. **Brokers, interlocutors and capacity builders.** This includes agencies that channel funds from the state, development donors or private financiers to smaller NGOs, and community-based organisations (CBOs). Typically, their main objective is to create, support and strengthen local organisations in an effort to contribute to development, alleviate poverty and so on. More recently, supporting local organisations in building peace and fostering reconciliation has become common. These interlocutors are often INGOs; Cordaid, Oxfam, and Care are well-known examples but also some national NGOs are known to have ventured into these domains.
- b. **International, service-providing NGOs.** These are the agencies that provide direct assistance to people in need, either through emergency relief, mine clearance or more structural forms of development. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Italian NGO Coopi and the Dutch organisation ZOA are examples.
- c. **National, service-providing NGOs** undertake the same activities as the previous group, but they operate within their own country only. Many are funded with foreign support; some were even created by or in response to the arrival of foreign development agencies. Others have a more autonomous history and steer clear of foreign interference with their work. Some of these agencies have a country-wide focus, but especially in bigger countries they often work in certain regions only.
- d. **CBOs** are smaller, community-level organisations that mainly serve their own constituencies by providing services, mobilising external aid or representing their communities towards outsiders. Unlike the previous groups they are often largely voluntary and have few paid staff or none at all.
- e. **Advocacy and watchdog organisations** are primarily directed at addressing problems and injustices by putting pressure on the state, companies or other organisations. Human rights organisations and pro-democracy movements are clear examples. Some agencies represent specific groups or issues. Some operate at local or national level, while others have formed large international networks.

Clearly, some organisations fit in more than one category. Cordaid itself is an example of a multi-mandate NGO, which fits in group a (much of its development work), group b (emergency relief) and group e (advocacy towards governments, international institutions and the private sector). NGO categories not mentioned here include: cultural, religious, or ethnic organisations; interest-based and occupational organisations; organisations related to diaspora; and information-oriented agencies, such as the media and academic institutions (Klem and Douma 2004). Whether these organisations are present and in what form strongly depends on the context and culture at stake. Caution must be exercised against an overly Western conception of civil society based on egalitarian, liberal state models that prevail in the Western world. Foreign actors often do not find any organisations that represent the civil society in Western eyes, or “they find groups that claim this label, mirroring Western society. But these groups are far from covering the range of different modalities of collective organization, and may have difficulty in establishing links with other forms of existing arrangements, especially at community level.” (Pouligny 2006: 68) For example, civil society in the three case studies does not have a history of vigilant, autonomous watchdogs, and the respective wars further impaired the position of civil society organisations. It is generally a mistake to assume that there is no meaningful civil society in a post-conflict country, however. Village councils (e.g. the Afghan *shuras*), churches (e.g. in Sierra Leone and the DRC) and other local organisations often continue to perform. Going by the above definition of civil society, even resistance, rebel and resurgent movements could be included in the concept. Although few people would reconcile the violent practices of the Rebel United Front (RUF) or Taliban with the civil society concept, clearly there are shades of grey between representation, activism, and violent struggle.

NGOs in development: pressure from above and below

NGOs have a long history of contributing to relief and development. Some of today’s humanitarian organisations go back to the Korean Crisis (World Vision), the Second World War (Care and Oxfam), the Spanish Civil War (Foster Parents Plan) or the legacy of the First World War (Save the Children) (Smillie et al. 1999:8). One of Cordaid’s constituents – *Mensen in Nood* – was founded to assist Belgian refugees to the Netherlands during the First World War. With the emergence of development cooperation in the second half of the twentieth century, international and national NGOs became a standard component of international solidarity and global aid flows in the 1970s. The role of civil society organisations in development, post-conflict recovery and peace building is now widely acknowledged and numerous bilateral donors channel a significant part of their budget through these organisations. The budgetary volume of the NGO sector has gradually expanded and in 2004 some US\$24 billion, or 30% of all international development aid that year, flowed through NGO activities (Riddell 2007: 259). Many NGOs have become professional service providers intervening in a vast array of sectoral and thematic areas. Based on the claims of NGOs themselves, it is estimated that some 600 million people are assisted through these activities at any given time (ibid: 269).

From the late 1980s and 1990s onwards, NGOs came under fire. Not everyone continued to accept their activities as intrinsically good acts of altruism. Scholars increasingly analysed NGOs as part of the polity, part of patrimonial politics and part of economic systems. Their legitimacy and effects were increasingly scrutinised as critics and analysts postulated that NGOs may be part of the problem as well as part of the solution (e.g. Edwards and Hulme 1996b). In the 1990s, publications like Smillie’s ‘Alms Bazaar’ and Chambers’s ‘Development Tourism’ heralded a rise of critical analysis of NGOs, which has now become commonplace in academic and policy debate. Mosse (2004) and other authors have warned against viewing NGOs through a programmatic or policy lens. Policies, reports and evaluations are in fact representations: contrary to the general assumption, NGO practice does not actually take shape on the basis of these policies and lessons. Practice is in fact driven by relations, organisational dynamics and cultural factors, Mosse argues, and policies are merely used as a legitimising discourse.

These findings underline the need for critical analysis. That there is a role for NGOs in relation to development is not normally contested, however. Many studies have underlined the relative strengths and virtues of NGOs and reported on the positive effects of their activities (e.g. Biekart and Fowler 1996). A global review of evaluations by the OECD estimated that some 90% of all NGO studies achieved their immediate objectives (Riddell et al. 1997). Positive inferences about their overall impact were made as well, but particularly the sustainability of these impacts proved to be a challenge (ibid). Annual reviews of humanitarian action by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) claimed many successes and thousands of lives saved, but also acknowledged numerous, persisting shortcomings (quoted in Riddell 2007: 336-340).

Despite their accomplishments, NGOs (and international ones in particular) have been contested from above and below. Pressure from below is generated by the increasing emphasis on the perspectives and rights of recipient communities and constituencies in developing countries. Insufficient sensitivity to local realities, poor opportunities for participation and influence by local communities, limited downward accountability and lack of sustainability all undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of NGO activity. Rapidly revolving staff tends to aggravate these problems. Particularly in war and post-war contexts, swift passages from one emergency to another are common. Aid agencies have also been charged with elitism and wasting money on staff salaries and expensive four-wheel drive cars. Finally, NGOs have been criticised for being change-resistant in face of the existing lessons. Clearly, these criticisms do not apply to all NGOs and certainly not in equal measure, but the NGO community at large has been affected by it.

Pressure from above is mounted by donor governments and state regulation in recipient countries. The latter have always been critical about infringements on their sovereignty, but the expansion of NGOs and increasing foreign interference as a result of globalisation at large may have reinforced these state reflexes. Meanwhile, donor governments have become increasingly stringent in assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, policy relevance and sustainability of NGO interventions (Edwards and Hulme 1996a). NGOs have become a means, rather than an end: rather than funding civil society organisations as worthy in themselves, they are paid to do something. Especially in emergency relief and post-conflict reconstruction, many NGOs have in effect become contractors for hire (Smillie et al. 1999: 8-10). This pushes them to the edge of the civil society concept as it puts pressure on their non-state identity. Their non-market identity is also strained in some cases, as they increasingly compete with private companies that provide similar services.

Though NGOs have continued to underline their impartiality and autonomy, critics such as Duffield suggest that notably large INGOs have become no more than foreign policy instruments of Western states (Duffield 2001). Critics in the South have aired similar views (e.g. Rajasingham-Senenayake 2003). Put more strongly, they stand accused as neo-imperial tools for fighting the 'war on terror' and installing Western-style governments in poor countries. This point of view is strongly contested by practitioners from a significant section of the INGO sector who increasingly are forced to fight off state infringement on their autonomy. The controversy between some large INGOs and Western governments around the issue of financial control mechanisms on international money transfers to INGO partner organisations (sometimes erroneously labelled terrorist organisations) is a case in point. These controversies highlight the tension between states and INGOs.

We take note of these criticisms, because these debates determine and define the position of NGOs and the way they are often perceived, though we do not necessarily concur with all the positions taken.

NGO engagement with violent conflict and security

Traditionally, NGO interventions in war contexts have been of a humanitarian nature – that is, they provided emergency relief in an independent, impartial and neutral manner. These activities are quite different from regular development cooperation, which inevitably grapples with issues of injustice, inequality, socio-economic transformation, political change and emancipation. In course of the 1990s, however, the two strands became increasingly intertwined. This was fuelled by increasing emphasis on conflict sensitivity, criticism of the gap between relief and subsequent development efforts, and the rise of multi-mandate NGOs (e.g. Frerks et al. 2006; Goodhand 2006). In addition to humanitarian work, NGOs are engaged in the wide array of activities associated with reconstruction, rehabilitation and peace building. Often, these activities take place in a no-war-no-peace context.

Because contemporary conflicts are typically multi-dimensional crises that require developmental, political and military intervention, donor governments have propagated integrated or 3D approaches (defence, development and diplomacy). Similarly, military doctrine has come to place major emphasis on civil-military cooperation, political affairs, reconstruction efforts and the importance of teaming up with NGOs, donor agencies, local civil society and government actors. The UN has launched the integrated mission concept which combines all its military, political and development interventions in a country (United Nations 2007; Frerks et al. 2006).

Many NGOs have followed suit in these changes, either because of donor policies (and funding) or as a result of their own reflections. Some NGOs raised the alarm, however. In their view, integrated approaches undermine humanitarian action by blurring the lines between the military and NGOs and by deliberately politicising and militarising aid. Moreover, they voiced concerns about staff security, institutional compatibility and the quality of aid. Other agencies nuanced these objections and advocated cautious forms of engagement with military and political actors. In their view, non-engagement was unwarranted because of the need for urgent coordinated action and the fact that the objections mentioned did not resonate with local communities (Frerks et al. 2006, Studer 2001, Renner 2005, CIDSE 2006).

DDR is a key component in many war-to-peace transitions and it is a typical example of a process that involves development, politics and security. Many of the above issues and concerns are thus expected to apply to DDR as well. In theory, all five types of NGO activity distinguished above could be mobilised to contribute to DDR.

This study did not encompass a general review of INGO views and policies on DDR, but a quick perusal of the websites of prominent INGOs suggests that they have not yet developed any DDR policies. No documents were found that reveal a more comprehensive view on DDR or a specific DDR position. Some NGOs have presented their views on certain elements of DDR (e.g. underage soldiers) or in relation to DDR in particular countries.

4 DDR in Afghanistan, the DRC, and Sierra Leone

The case studies undertaken in this research presented a fairly detailed review of the DDR processes in Afghanistan, the DRC and Sierra Leone. Prior to assessing the role of NGOs, we suffice here with a short summary of the context and evolution of the DDR programme in these three countries.

The DDR process in Afghanistan took place in the context of an unfinished war and troubled state under continued siege by the Taliban and other insurgents. It was also part of the foreign strategy on the frontline in the ‘war on terror’, which involved military intervention, re-establishment of Afghan state structures and reconstruction (among others through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams). International involvement by the US, NATO, the UN, neighbouring countries, and other actors was thus rife. The DDR programme reflected the diversity of armed actors. Pro-government forces – the Northern Alliance, which had helped oust the Taliban regime – were processed through a voluntary DDR programme. A second programme – the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) – was created to force resistant parts of the alliance as well as other rebel and criminal groups to join civilian life. Both DDR of the Northern Alliance and DIAG were administered by the government with operational support from the UN and financial support from donors. Finally, armed groups in active opposition to the Karzai government and its Western allies (the Taliban, Al Qaeda, related insurgents, and other criminal groups) were confronted with military means. Parallel to this, the National Reconciliation Programme was set up to stimulate individual *Talibs* to leave their ranks and reintegrate into civilian life.

Though common shortcomings of DDR – persisting arms market, the position of women and children, insufficient training, inadequate aid in kind, no sustainable employment – were reported, DDR for the Northern Alliance registered significant success: the bulk of the targeted combatants was processed. Social obstacles to reintegration moreover seemed limited, as many fighters never really left their communities and because they were often seen as heroes and victors. The pacification of the top brass and middle level commanders was more problematic, however. Absorbing them into lucrative government positions further infected the state with incapacity, factionalism and corruption. The DIAG programme further exposed this problem as many leaders of the illegal armed groups (IAGs) were in fact GOLIAGs – Government Officials Linked to Illegal Armed Groups – while other groups reinvented themselves as legalised, private military companies (PMCs). The DIAG programme thus ran into hard political and economic interests of powerful figures and managed to produce little. While President Karzai continued to pay tribute the programme, it was largely seen as a show to please donors, one that lacked the political commitment required for any success. Some people alleged that DIAG only succeeded in targeting old and retired commanders and thus jokingly referred to the programme as ‘DIAGRA’.

The hitherto failure of DIAG highlights the difficulty of executing DDR in the presence of an ongoing conflict. In relation to this, the Afghanistan case study observed that a number of combatants (both commanders and foot soldiers) found sources of income outside the DDR programmes, among others in the war economy. Particularly the thriving illegal opium industry and the non-state security sector (office guards, PMCs) provided ample employment.

The **DRC** case study reviewed the troublesome efforts of consolidating peace in a continent-sized country without functioning infrastructure or reliable state institutions. The welter of local and regional conflicts in Central Africa that escalated in the late 1990s have been labelled as Africa’s First and Second World War. A wide range of actors – state and non-state, domestic and foreign – struggled for state control and the natural resources of the DRC, while more localised dynamics (including ethnic rivalries) were drawn in as well. The conflict resulted in a massive, protracted humanitarian emergency. Following the Sun City peace agreement of 2002, the DDR process was to be executed by the different sections of the government, while the UN peacekeeping mission MONUC⁶ assisted with disarmament, demobilisation

⁶ MONUC stands for Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo.

and reintegration into the new Congolese army. Demobilisation and reintegration were funded through a regional framework: the MDRP, a trust fund administered by the World Bank.

Despite the creation of these financial and institutional structures, at first very little DDR actually happened on the ground. Continued or re-escalating violence, political gridlocks, the absence of an adequate infrastructure and operational capacity and the challenging context at large impaired the programme. In particular, reintegration did not get off the ground. In Ituri, a conflict-ridden district in north-eastern DRC, this initial paralysis was broken by hiring a private contractor (the American firm Chemonix) for a quick and dirty processing of ex-combatants. Elsewhere, UN agencies and NGOs moved in to implement reintegration programmes. Societal cleavages, rampant unemployment, and continued insecurity hampered these efforts. Programmatic ills and lack of sensitivity to local context and needs exacerbated these difficulties. Mainly male ex-fighters benefited from DDR, whereas the majority of ex-WAAFG, ex-CAAFG, associated groups and so-called dependents disappeared from the DDR radar screen. In a context of widespread socio-economic deprivation and an almost total collapse of the formal economy, reintegration faced enormous structural constraints.

Similar to the Afghan case, the accommodation of commanders in state positions undermined the legitimacy and capacity of the government. Particularly the Congolese army with its numerous ex-rebel generals came to be a source of trouble, insecurity and human rights abuses. These problems persisted despite efforts at transition through a system of cantonment sites, where the various strands of ex-fighters were supposed to be retrained and mixed to form a new unified national army. The DDR process has not yet been completed as a result of continuing insecurity in parts of eastern DRC. Notably in North Kivu a substantial number of ex-combatants were remobilised as rebels. Presently, DDR funding has more or less dried up even though major security challenges remain.

The third case study, **Sierra Leone**, concerns a much smaller country and the DDR programme grappled with a much smaller number of armed groups: mainly the RUF, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and government soldiers who became rebels (the Junta). Possibly as a result of this, the DDR programme seems to have generated more successes than the other two cases. Despite initial reversals, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the UK military managed to enforce stability and the reinstallation of the Kabbah government. DDR was initiated in parallel to these efforts, but the bulk of the ex-combatants was assisted after the 2001 peace agreement. While UNAMSIL played a vital role in kick-starting DDR with disarmament, the government's National Commission for DDR (NCDDR) led the programme. Foreign donors, however, provided the funding and bilateral agencies and NGOs provided the operational capacity for reintegration.

Partly as a result of DDR, Sierra Leone has undergone a remarkable transition. Disarmament and demobilisation were largely successful and contributed to a more stable and secure context. Social and economic reintegration, however, suffered from serious shortcomings. Though most of the ex-combatants live civilian lives now, many of the underlying causes of the conflict – state illegitimacy, youth marginalisation, the war economy – continued to exist or were even reproduced. As was the case elsewhere, reintegration in the context of a largely destroyed economy proved to be rather cumbersome. Reintegration often failed to provide sustainable livelihood perspectives. Many people eligible for DDR assistance were excluded from the programme through prevailing patronage and nepotism, especially ex-WAAFG, ex-CAAFG and CDF fighters who did not have a modern weapon to present. Shortcomings in the quality and quantity of training and assets inhibited employment. Many male ex-combatants meanwhile found work outside the DDR programme, for example in the Okada (motor taxi) business. Large numbers of ex-CAAFG or ex-WAAFG struggle for survival as casual labourers, street vendors or prostitutes. The post-conflict economic perspectives in Sierra Leone, both for ex-fighters and civilians, remain rather bleak.

The three case studies provide vivid illustrations of the DDR-related difficulties and controversies discussed in section 2. Each of the DDR programmes took place in what may be called a state building context with major and multidimensional challenges. They also reveal pertinent differences with regard to the conflict background, the nature of the war-to-peace transition (if that is what is at stake in Afghanistan and the DRC), the type of armed actors, and the characteristics of international involvement. These differences underline the importance of a context-specific approach. Two observations are of particular importance with regard to the role of NGOs.

Firstly, the three countries show that DDR is a broad societal process with implications at many levels and in many sectors. The actual reintegration of ex-combatants is a broader process than the DDR programmes themselves. The self-demobilisation of numerous ex-CAAFG in the DRC prior to the commencement of the DDR programme, the presence of Afghan former fighters in PMCs and the fact that the Okada motor taxi business in Sierra Leone came forward as one of the most successful strategies towards economic reintegration all bear tribute to this. These examples show that a formal DDR programme is not the only game in town for reintegrating ex-combatants. This does not imply, however, that the formal DDR programmes were insignificant. On the contrary, the three programmes studied were rather large endeavours involving big sums of money. Even the programmes that did not fulfil their objectives (mainly DDR in the DRC and DIAG) had major political, military and economic ramifications. We may conclude that DDR was a salient part of the transitions occurring in Afghanistan, the DRC and Sierra Leone. Even NGOs which were not involved with the DDR programme may still have to deal with various aspects of the DDR programme or the de facto process of self-DDR occurring in society.

Secondly, some of the shortcomings of the DDR programme point towards a role for NGOs, while some of the obstacles identified in the case studies clearly surpass the abilities of an NGO. Continued warfare, incapable or illegitimate government structures and lack of political will on the part of the armed groups are key examples of this. These challenges in fact surpass the abilities of a DDR programme at large and they underline the above observation that DDR cannot drive military or political change; it can at best consolidate wider transitions. However, in addition to these contextual challenges, the case studies identified important shortcomings with regard to programme implementation. These included inadequate or insufficient training, malpractices with regard to toolkits or other aid assets, and difficulties in finding sustained employment. The cases of DRC and Sierra Leone also pointed towards the exclusion of certain beneficiaries (particularly women and children) and in some cases problems related to the societal acceptance of ex-combatants. These are 'old' difficulties; the impressive stock of analyses and policy development has apparently not yet resulted in strategies to overcome these challenges. More importantly for this study, the problems mentioned indicate that NGOs have something to contribute. After all, many NGOs would consider capacity building, sustainable livelihoods, reconciliation, and the position of marginalised groups part of their mandate and competence. As discussed below, there may be problems related to NGO involvement in DDR processes and they may have legitimate reasons not to get involved, but leaving that aside for the moment: we may conclude that NGOs can help improve DDR results, directly or indirectly.

5 NGO involvement in DDR

In this report we distinguish five ways NGOs could potentially contribute to DDR: 1) as an international advocate; 2) as a representative of domestic stakeholders; 3) as an implementing agent; 4) as an intermediary; 5) as a complementing agent. The sections below will review to what extent NGOs adopted these roles in the cases studied.

International advocacy

This first role transcends the level of the case studies. As discussed, there is little evidence that the bigger INGOs have developed general views and policies about DDR, but think tanks like the International Peace Academy (IPA) and the International Crisis Group (ICG) have facilitated analysis and discussion on these issues. Strikingly, however, there was no evidence of NGO involvement in the formulation of the IDDRS. Though the standards underline the need for engagement with NGOs, they were created without significant civil society consultation, a person associated with the process reported.

At a more specific level, however, INGOs have been active in advocacy on components of DDR and issues directly related to it. The SALW lobby is a salient example. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and its partner institutes have a lasting track record in raising global awareness of the small arms issue. They pressure governments and international organisations to ratify and implement the UN firearms protocol and national gun laws and to curb regional arms markets. In a similar vein, the Small Arms Survey project has become a vital resource with regard to SALW proliferation, its impact and what might be done about it. Many of the activities of the small arms lobby are related directly or indirectly to DDR issues. Regional policy frameworks such as the Nairobi Protocol – a document signed by eleven East African governments spelling out their strategy on the SALW problem – are a concrete outcome of the activities of SALW NGOs.

The above-discussed Coalition to stop the use of Child Soldiers is another example. This NGO platform has advocated for greater sensitivity of DDR programmes to the needs of ex-CAAFG and it has been a driving force behind the Paris Principles.

Representation and advocacy at national level

In contrast with international advocacy, the three case studies show that NGO involvement with national DDR policy and planning is very limited or completely absent. The programmes were designed by government officials, and foreign experts or organisations. Though the studies do not completely rule out the possibility that NGOs were somehow involved (after all, the programme design preceded our fieldwork by a few years), no evidence was found of any significant stakeholder or NGO representation in the formulation of the DDR programme. None of the organisations interviewed felt they had had any influence on the overall design, the modalities of DDR benefits, the eligibility criteria and so on. At a more detailed level, a number of modest examples of civil society influence were found. In the Sierra Leonean case, NGOs were reported to have advised and monitored UNAMSIL in the screening of ex-CAAFG. Similarly, the screening of DDR applicants in the Afghan case was done by Regional Verification Committees, which consisted of “highly respected” individuals from society. Though they are not NGOs, these people could be seen as civil society representatives. In the DRC, NGOs were generally unable to lobby effectively for community involvement in DDR programmes. It thus requires a very close look to detect some minimal influence of NGOs or civil society on the set-up of the programmes. The conclusion is warranted that the watchdog role that may be associated with civil society as a representative of society and a counterweight to the state did not come forward with regard to the design of DDR programmes.

Implementation

Each of the case studies reported major NGO involvement in the implementation of DDR.

Disarmament. In most cases NGOs had no significant role in the process of disarmament, which was considered a military affair. In Afghanistan, there was only one example: Halo Trust provided vital support to the disarmament process by collecting, sorting, storing and demolishing ammunition and weapons. Especially the collection of heavy weapons, while not in the mandate of DDR, was mentioned as a significant success. The main problems related to disarmament were the application of selection criteria (who qualifies as an ex-fighter?), logistical problems (how to get disarmed ex-fighters to cantonment sites?) and problems of timing and follow-up with the demobilisation phase (how many fighters? when and how to process them in a timely manner?). Also, particularly in the case of the DRC, due to the political stalemate between protagonist factions, disarmament was delayed and the entire reception and processing chain remained idle for a long period. In all three cases there was a strong tendency to meddle with the selection of ex-combatants mainly due to the prevailing nepotism and patrimonial practices. This resulted in biases towards people related to political figureheads and former commanders, who were able to manipulate selection in favour of their allies and cronies. In both African cases, it also resulted in the exclusion of women. The de facto eligibility criterion – handing in a weapon – was inadequate, as civilians provided with weapons slipped through the net and militia leaders took away weapons from many ex-fighters, who consequently lost out. Women in supporting positions generally could not produce a gun. People who wanted to be accepted into the DDR programme often had to bribe their way in, the case studies showed. These screening processes largely happened without NGO involvement, however. As was mentioned, community leaders in Afghanistan took part in vetting procedures. Also, NGOs and UNICEF typically helped out with the selection of ex-CAAFG. Both in Sierra Leone and the DRC, NGOs monitored the identification of underage fighters, took part in interviewing them, and advocated against unjust exclusion of ex-CAAFG.

Demobilisation. In both African cases, NGOs provided assistance in the demobilisation camps. In Afghanistan, no NGO involvement with demobilisation was reported, possibly because the programme did not consist of an encampment phase. In the DRC and Sierra Leone, NGOs were especially active for ex-CAAFG and to a lesser extent for adult ex-combatants. Congolese demobilisation would have been impossible without the engagement of these organisations, as the national coordinating body CONADER⁷ got off to a very late start. As a result of slow procedures and institutional infighting with competing national entities, CONADER was unable to perform well. If INGOs and bilateral agencies (GTZ) had not been advancing funds for the operation of the cantonment sites, the entire demobilisation process would have floundered. In Sierra Leone, NGO involvement played a less decisive role, but they provided food, mosquito nets, and sanitary facilities to the demobilisation camps. They also offered medical checkups, recreational activities, sensitisation programmes and training to the temporary inhabitants of these camps.

In all three countries, NGOs assisted in reinsertion activities. They provided exit kits to ex-combatants, typically containing food items, clothes and some kitchen and household utensils. In Sierra Leone and the DRC, manual labour projects (ex-combatants building roads, houses and so on for a daily wage) were organised as well.

In the DRC and in Sierra Leone, NGOs were particularly active in the demobilisation of underage combatants.⁸ The Transit and Orientation Centres (DRC) and the Interim Care Centres (Sierra Leone) were constructed and operated by NGOs in collaboration with UNICEF. It was in these centres that ex-CAAFG were demobilised, while preparations were made for family reunification, return to school or the search for employment.

⁷ CONADER stands for Commission Nationale pour la Démobilisation et la Réintégration.

⁸ In Afghanistan, the number of ex-CAAFG enrolling for DDR was very limited: UNICEF processed fewer than 200.

Particularly in the DRC, there was a gap between demobilisation of adults and their reintegration programme. Partly because the cantonment sites gobbled up much of the available funding, many ex-combatants had to wait for months, even over a year. The return of ex-combatants to their place of origin after demobilisation was also delayed. The lack of timely reintegration caused frustration and mounting tension among ex-combatants and in some cases even violent protests and harassment of NGO staff. In turn, this led to the initiation of regular cash payments for a one-year period: the so-called safety net instalments. These cash payments caused insecurity during payment days in urban centres and a false sense of entitlement among the rank and file of ex-fighters (“we have earned this money”; “it is our war bonus”). Often, the allowance was spent on consumer items, including drugs, alcohol and sunglasses. Meanwhile, this money was deducted from the available funds for the entire DDR trajectory. Safety net instalments would have been more opportune in a later stage: during reintegration training programmes, when many ex-fighters could not cater for the needs of their dependents.

Reintegration. It is fair to conclude that the reintegration component relied heavily on NGO involvement. International agencies (such as UNICEF, UNDP and IOM) and bilateral aid agencies (mainly GTZ) subcontracted much work to the NGO community. In some cases reintegration activities were contracted to private companies (most notably Chemonix in Ituri, DRC). NGOs also played a role in spreading awareness about the possibilities and requirements of the programme, as they were in frequent contact with communities and ex-combatants. Despite their efforts, inflated expectations and misunderstandings were still a common occurrence. In some cases, the NGOs themselves were unclear about the details of the programme, because they had not been properly informed or because criteria and standards were changing.

Reintegration mainly consisted of: vocational training and apprenticeships (drivers, tailors, haircutters and so on); the provision of tools or cattle to start agriculture; the provision of funds or implements to start a small shop or petty trade; guidance towards school or informal education (mainly for ex-CAAFG); offering de-mining jobs; and customised training for commanders. Often NGOs were tasked with a specific sector or batch of ex-combatants and they had to compete to ‘get’ a project. Typically, the processing of ex-combatants was a fairly standardised affair with given time frames, budgets, and material assets. All of these were normally set by the DDR authorities: the government or the foreign actors supporting them. Systemic flaws in the entire set-up were the lack of proper socio-economic baseline surveys for implementation areas, the absence of local labour market assessments, and the lack of knowledge of the basic features of the local formal and shadow economies (the latter thriving on years of lack of a legitimate central authority and war profiteering by elite groups involved in illicit trading of natural resources). The training offered was often too short and the kits provided were insufficient to kick-start earnings and compete with existing economic actors. Economic sectors that could absorb labour (e.g. agriculture in Sierra Leone) were not always exploited properly. This was partly a consequence of the opportunities offered and partly the result of poor choices made by ex-combatants themselves. Due to these shortcomings, reintegration activities provided mostly short-term benefits and opportunities to ex-fighters, but often failed to deliver sustainable results. Many ex-combatants were unemployed and they had trouble eking out an income despite the training and assets they received.

The extent to which NGOs were capable of processing the caseloads of ex-fighters varied, depending on time and place. In some cases, national DDR authorities had difficulty finding suitable partners (e.g. in the early days of DDR in Sierra Leone and in parts of the DRC), while this was no obstacle elsewhere (e.g. Afghanistan). Local NGOs often lacked the ability to advance funding and were thus fully dependent on donor transfers. When these were delayed, implementation was stalled. Identifying adequate partners, establishing working relations and procedures, securing institutional strengths and dividing up the reintegration work often took considerable effort and thus time. Competition among donors and intermediaries added further difficulty. In the DRC case, this even resulted in a near paralysis

of the programme in Ituri. A breakthrough was eventually coerced by a bilateral donor (the US Agency for International Development, USAID) and an American company (Chemonix), which processed a staggering 15,000 ex-combatants over a seven-month period. Chemonix, however, did a quick and dirty job, cared little about local capacity building, did not involve local NGOs and did not ensure sustainability.

Intermediary

Many INGOs did not implement the above-discussed activities themselves, but subcontracted them to local artisans (e.g. a tailor) or smaller NGOs. In fact, in many cases, there was a subcontracting chain with funds going from the donor to a trust fund to the central government to an INGO to a local NGO to a craftsman or other local entity. NGOs formed a vital part of this chain and their activities consisted of the provision of funds, policy guidance, training, and control (downwards) and monitoring reports (upwards). This chain system is to some extent inevitable, because of the sheer size of a DDR programme and because government DDR authorities and donors often have limited operational capacity and insufficient field presence. However, the hierarchical system also raises various concerns. Firstly, inequalities between national and international NGOs often have adverse effects. INGOs were reported to crowd out the local ones due to better access to donors, larger cash reserves, and superior institutional capacities. The niche for national agencies is further diminished when INGOs organise implementation themselves through direct recruitment of local staff. Secondly, the chain system increases the number of layers between decision-makers and beneficiaries, thus impeding downward accountability. Thirdly, each of the layer incurs overhead costs, which are further increased by reporting obligations between these layers. As a result, the efficiency of the overall system suffers and lower echelon organisations and individuals may end up with less money to get the job done.

Complementary activities

We observed earlier that DDR as a societal process and the strategies used by ex-combatant for their reintegration are broader than the formal DDR programme. Similarly, NGO activities may contribute to the reintegration of ex-combatants even though they are not labelled DDR. Examples of such activities came forward from the Sierra Leonean case study in particular, but featured in the Afghan and DRC case studies as well. The most common example concerns NGO projects which targeted ex-combatants, their families and other community members. In all three countries, NGOs reported that there were ex-combatants among the beneficiaries of their 'regular' development activities. The Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA), for example, executed reconciliation projects involving different ethnic groups and observed that this also had a positive effect on the reintegration of ex-combatants. Other NGOs in Afghanistan (and in Sierra Leone) reported that ex-combatants joined their micro credit schemes after DDR was completed. In some cases this was even a deliberate strategy, because such mixed initiatives were considered a more effective contribution to reintegration than dedicated activities for ex-combatants only. In Sierra Leone, agencies deliberately mixed training for reintegrating ex-combatants with their regular vocational training. Similarly, the Interim Care Centres (Sierra Leone) and Transit and Orientation Centres (DRC) for ex-CAAFG also serviced unaccompanied children who had not been part of an armed group. This latter practice is prescribed by the IDDRS.

In some cases, ex-combatants were not part of the beneficiary group of NGOs, but part of their staff. Though most ex-combatants interviewed explained that being an ex-combatant impeded their chances for employment with NGOs, some had succeeded in becoming aid workers. In some cases, their military background was an asset: as became clear in the Afghan case, some ex-combatants work as guards for NGO offices or as de-miners for Halo Trust.

Other NGO activities were aimed at addressing the gaps in the DDR programme. Agencies thus assisted people who should have received DDR assistance but missed out, because of shame or because they

could not hand over a weapon. The Girls Left Behind project of Caritas Makeni (Sierra Leone) targeted women who had been part of the RUF (as combatant, sex slave or otherwise), but were either barred from participating in DDR or had not dared to enrol. Many of them had resorted to prostitution to survive until the NGO offered them vocational training and food (during the training). Another example from Makeni concerns the work of Access to Justice. Many ex-combatants in the town have become motor taxi drivers. These so-called Okadas make good money, but there are problems with their driving skills, legal registration and clashes with the police, social stigmatisation of former rebels and occasional violence when minor disagreements get out of hand. Access to Justice tries to address these issues by supporting the Okadas in organising themselves, improving their standards, training the police, and providing legal support.

In Kindu (DRC) the INGO Oxfam/Novib funded a Congolese NGO to set up a pilot community disarmament project aimed at community rehabilitation, reconciliation between ex-fighters and their respective communities and disarmament. Specific vulnerable groups, such as raped women, received special medical and judicial support. In addition, some anecdotal evidence was found of NGO involvement with disarmament outside of the DDR programme. In Sierra Leone, for example, DDR was complemented by a UN-led arms-for-development programme, which tried to tackle the issue of SALW in communities. This effort tried to capture the weapons that either fell outside the scope of DDR (because they were not held by ex-combatants) or had simply been missed by DDR. NGOs were reported to collaborate in this effort.

Finally, some NGOs were themselves an outcome of the DDR. The Sierra Leone case study reported cases of ex-combatants organising themselves. A prime example was the Okada motorcycle associations, which consisted largely of ex-combatants who had united themselves without external assistance. These organisations served the interests of these ex-fighters, helped them earn an income and tried to resolve political or societal tensions around the Okada business. On a smaller scale, many cases were reported where ex-combatants continued to liaise with and depend on their former commanders. These ties are somewhat controversial, however, as one of the underlying goals of DDR is usually to disintegrate fighting units and thus sever ties between commanders and their troops.

Cordaid partners

Cordaid's partners reflect the diversity on the NGO scene. Some of them (Caritas Makeni and Caritas Kenema in Sierra Leone, ADED and BICE in the DRC, and VARA in Afghanistan) were strongly engaged in the implementation of DDR, more specifically in reintegration projects and processing of ex-CAAFG. In Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, these activities were unrelated to Cordaid's funding and policy. Some other partners were involved in a marginal or indirect manner. A fairly big group was not involved with DDR at all. In Sierra Leone that had mainly been for practical reasons (engaged in other work or not present at the right time and place). In Afghanistan, however, one of Cordaid's partners deliberately shied away from DDR, as it was seen to be a political and military affair. This is further discussed in the following section.

6 Strategic considerations

NGOs can contribute to DDR, as became clear from the preceding observations. Whether or not they should do so, and how, will depend on a number of strategic considerations. Obviously, such an analysis cannot be monolithic: how these considerations play out obviously depends on the context, the type of organisation, and the characteristics of the individual NGO. However, a number of generic observations can be made.

Risks and concerns

There may be reasons not to engage in DDR. The concerns that emerged from the case studies can be summarised under three headings: 1) DDR was perceived as a military issue outside the NGO mandate, 2) fear of politicisation and related security risks, and 3) priority was given to other, greater needs and beneficiaries felt to be more deserving. The first two points link in with the wider debate on civil-military relations and the extent to which NGOs are willing to collaborate with peacekeepers and politically charged activities affiliated with state building. As became clear from the case studies and the literature discussed in section 2, DDR involves taking military and political power from one group of people and giving it to another and is thus inevitably sensitive. Taking part in such a programme entails siding with the government (however weak its legitimacy and capacity may be) and its international allies in their quest to restore order and a monopoly of violence, while pacifying armed spoilers. Furthermore, when there are political tensions between specific ethnic and regional groups, agitation may arise about the distribution of assets and the political and military power balance. Clearly, such endeavours may conjure up tensions with humanitarian and development principles. On the other hand, not all parts of DDR are equally controversial. Sensitising ex-combatants to civilian life and helping them find alternative employment is less politically charged than naming and shaming a GOLIAG or transferring weapons from armed communities to the ramshackle DRC army. Moreover, there is a wider debate on the extent to which pure neutrality is attainable or desirable. Striving for a just and peaceful society inevitably has political implications and DDR may fit well in that overall strategy. As earlier research has pointed out, it is very difficult to completely abstain from contact government actors and peacekeepers, and local communities often do not expect NGOs to do so (Frerks et al. 2006).

Many NGOs interviewed in Afghanistan felt participating in DDR (and DD in particular) would compromise their neutrality. The DIAG programme was widely perceived as particularly political, and NGOs were kept out of this programme anyway. The de-mining agency Halo Trust is the only exception. In apparent contradiction, however, the same organisations had no problem calling on NATO and the wider international community to establish security and reintegrate ex-combatants. They were thus willing to side with the government on general security issues, but were hesitant to translate that into operational collaboration and interfere in the internal squabbles of governing elites.

Similar concerns about politicisation and security were reported in the DRC case, though this was mainly the view of the INGOs; they had much less resonance among the Congolese agencies. A distinction was also made between the different components of DDR. Disarmament, demobilisation and military reintegration (through the *Centres de Brassage et Recyclage*) were highly sensitive, while assisting ex-CAAFG and (as time went by) adult reintegration were more widely practised.

The fewest objections and concerns were reported in Sierra Leone. Most agencies had no major objection to contributing to DDR. Only in the initial stages did NGOs voice concerns. Security issues were an imminent concern at first, as DDR was interrupted several times in the early phases due to re-escalating combat. International peacekeepers were taken hostage in this turbulent chain of events and staff safety was a real concern for NGOs, as it was for anyone else, in fact. Once the rebellion was curbed, however,

DDR became much less controversial. NGOs participated intensively, particularly in reintegration, but in the demobilisation camps and during the disarmament of ex-CAAFG as well. The three case studies thus suggest a logical trend. Political and security concerns are more prominent: 1) in DD than in R, 2) with adults than with ex-CAAFG and 3) when war is still ongoing or an imminent risk. They came forward quite strongly in the Afghan case, had partially withered in the DRC and were hardly detectable any more in Sierra Leone.

The third basic reason to avoid involvement with DDR concerns the fact that NGOs may have other priorities than assisting ex-combatants. Immediate post-war contexts are often characterised by the return of people who were displaced, while infrastructure, livelihoods, housing, healthcare and other services need to be rehabilitated. As has been mentioned, there may be groups of people who need assistance more badly than those who belonged to an armed group and it may be perceived as morally or socially troublesome to assist those who perpetrated violence, while ignoring the needs of their victims. Also, many INGOs and NGOs have a specific mandate that obliges them to attend to the needs of the most vulnerable people, and often these are not the ex-combatants. These concerns came forward in practice. Many NGOs in Sierra Leone, for example, were initially busy with resettlement and refused to assist ex-combatants and their dependents in DDR camps as they felt the conditions were already better there than among returning IDPs. Other agencies carried out work for amputees and war wounded rather than for DDR, because that was where their expertise lay. Similarly, in Afghanistan NGOs were engaged in a wide range of rehabilitation activities and DDR was not on their radar screen. Many in fact did not even know what it was. In the DRC case, on the other hand, few NGOs quoted other priorities as a reason not to engage in DDR. In fact, in some areas, regular relief and development activities were rather limited compared to DDR.

However, it also became clear that distinctions between perpetrators and victims and between DDR and other activities are not absolute. Among the beneficiaries of DDR are many people in marginal positions, including ex-WAAFG and ex-CAAFG, because of social stigma, lack of income and education, psychological or physical health problems, and so on. Meanwhile, the supposed rift, or even enmity, between communities and ex-combatants may not be so clear. For example, the fighters of the Northern Alliance (Afghanistan), the CDF (Sierra Leone) and various ethnic and community militias in the DRC served as part-time soldiers. They never became detached from their communities and were often seen as protectors, heroes, or victors. Moreover, the data underscore that whether or not to engage in DDR is not a black and white decision. Accepting funding to implement a reintegration project does not necessarily impede the other activities of an NGO. In fact, aid agencies may combine DDR activities with other projects. In the DRC, examples are the work of BICE in the Kasai provinces and ACIAR in Ituri (intensive labour project for ex-combatants and other community members). In Sierra Leone, the Interim Care Centres (which processed both ex-CAAFG and other unaccompanied children) and joint vocational training for ex-combatants and other people require mention. Similarly, even projects which do not carry the label DDR often benefit ex-combatants, be it intentionally or unintentionally. In all three cases, NGOs reported that there were ex-combatants among the target populations and even among their staff.

The case studies thus reveal that all three cautions – the military nature of DDR, politicisation and other priorities – may be valid reasons to abstain from participation in DDR, but they are far from absolute. NGOs may be involved more or less intensively, explicitly or in a more indirect manner and in different components of the DDR process. To what extent this is warranted and how interventions are best tailored depends on the circumstances and the agency at hand.

Added value

It was already observed in section 4 that a number of pertinent challenges in DDR programmes correspond with activities that NGOs are generally good at. Inadequate or unsustainable social and economic reintegration and lack of sensitivity towards special groups are recurring points of criticism and it seems that NGOs are well-equipped to contribute to a cure for these ills. NGOs often claim to be endowed with elaborate field presence and proximity to communities; experience with capacity building and activities such as income generation, community mobilisation and empowerment; trust relationships, cultural sensitivity and mechanisms for consultation and participation; sensitivity to the needs of the marginalised (often including women and children). As discussed in section 3, these virtues can obviously not be taken for granted. The case studies indeed present a nuanced picture, but they confirmed the assertion that NGOs have added value, though they may also add trouble (discussed below).

The studies confirmed that NGOs have expertise with regard to vocational training, sensitisation and reconciliation, though sub-standard work was reported as well. The training programmes and internships some of the agencies provided to ex-combatants closely resembled their other work. The same holds true for improving the facilities in DDR camps in Sierra Leone and in the DRC, as NGOs had constructed latrines and the like elsewhere. Family reunification and guidance for ex-CAAFG is another example, as this merged with ongoing community projects. Mixing DDR activities with other development activities would arguably only support the objective of reintegration. The DRC case highlighted the fact that NGOs are not the only ones who can do this kind of work. As has been described earlier, the company Chemonix implemented a much larger and faster reintegration project than any of the other agencies. Problems arose with the quality of this programme, however, and NGOs were observed to deliver more adequate assistance.

Secondly, the three cases also substantiated the assertion that many NGOs have a greater field presence than most other development actors. Though the sector seems to mirror the state in some ways – offices tend to be in provincial or district capitals, with limited presence in rural areas – they were often more mobile than their UN counterparts and government officials, who were restricted by tight security standards (UN agencies and donors in particular) and urban-bound obligations or priorities. In Sierra Leone, UN peacekeepers and UN agencies had withdrawn most of their resources from regional hubs like Makeni and Kenema, local government capacities were depleted and the efforts of line ministries to visit less accessible areas were scarce. In some cases there were significant distinctions between different kinds of NGOs. Typically, CBOs and national NGOs had greater local presence, while foreign agencies (interlocutors and service providers) focused more strongly on the national or provincial capitals or (particularly in the DRC) had been slow to make their entry. The Sierra Leone study raised some questions about sustainability of NGO presence. As the country entered a phase of relative stability, some of the INGOs had already gone on to more pressing crisis areas, such as neighbouring Liberia. Some local NGOs meanwhile had difficulty maintaining their programmes as donor funds dried up.

In relation to the previous point, thirdly, NGOs were able to connect to relevant local actors and adopt locally acceptable practices. Awareness of local custom, language and histories was an advantage and many local staff of NGOs were able to connect effectively with ex-combatants and other local actors. In all three cases, NGOs (mainly the local ones) connected to local artisans, craftsmen and businesses for economic reintegration projects. In the Sierra Leonean case, NGOs supported traditional healing ceremonies aimed at forgiving perpetrators of violence and clearing the ground for their return to the community.

Fourthly, the studies confirmed the assumption that NGOs are more amenable to support and include special groups. Though female and underage combatants were rare in Afghanistan, they were a common occurrence in the two African cases. In both countries, however, the DDR programme tended to exclude

ex-CAAFG and ex-WAAFG. NGOs reportedly addressed this deficiency prior to, alongside and after the DDR programmes. Along with UNICEF, they attempted to address the needs of ex-CAAFG and advocated for their access to DDR benefits and greater sensitivity to their needs. Deliberate additional activities for women who used to reside with armed factions were observed in both countries as well (e.g. Caritas Makeni, Sierra Leone; Coopii and FOMI in the DRC), but in view of the numbers involved, these efforts were fairly small.

A fifth asset that may be attributed to NGOs concerns their ability to represent local communities and enhance consultation and participation in DDR programmes. The evidence gathered in this study largely refutes this idea, however. With some minor exceptions (e.g. the lobby of Congolese NGOs to include war-affected civilians in DDR projects), NGOs served as service providers only. They had no meaningful influence on the design of the DDR programmes and their projects often processed caseloads of ex-combatants in a fairly standardised manner. The top-down and blueprint-like approach to DDR came forward as a major error in all three cases. Vocational training without a labour market assessment (e.g. a surplus of tailors), training of insufficient quality and quantity (e.g. resulting in ex-combatants building houses that collapse), and inadequate material assistance (e.g. a cow for someone who has no space to keep it) were the result. If NGOs have the capacity to serve as a veritable civil society – a watchdog of the state and a platform for communities – then the cases suggest that this ability needs to be better exploited.

Added trouble

The case studies also shed light on some of the weaknesses of NGOs in relation to DDR. They can be summarised under four headings. Firstly, they portrayed a tendency to replicate systemic failures, for example those with regard to vocational training and the toolkits provided. Deficiencies with regard to geographic spread (urban focus) and approach (delivering benefits rather than customising projects to local needs and circumstances) were often mirrored as well. In Sierra Leone, it was observed that many of the shortcomings of DDR at large rested with the implementing partners, and similar observations were made in the DRC. This is partly due to the top-down nature of DDR programmes and the limited possibilities of deviating from pre-designed blueprints, but this does not detract from the responsibility of the NGOs implementing the programme. Apart from programmatic flaws, cases of malpractice and corruption were reported. DDR programmes tend to be large and expensive. In a context of patrimonialism, war economies, and weak and non-transparent state institutions, large sums of money almost inevitably get drawn into these local dynamics. Unfortunately, NGO staff often fail to escape this tendency once they get a foot in the door. Misappropriation of funds and non-delivery on promises were reported both in Sierra Leone and the DRC. NGOs even acknowledged that staff had requested bribes and even sexual favours in return for the delivery of aid. Though there were some complaints about the selection of beneficiaries in Afghanistan, no cases of NGO corruption were reported here.

Secondly, many of the NGOs contracted for DDR were merely created to execute a project and capture the overhead. In some cases, private entrepreneurs adopted an NGO outfit in order to access funding or evade tax obligations. These agencies often lacked a track record, functioning institutional structures, experienced staff, and a historical rapport with local communities. Though some of these contractor NGOs may have delivered adequate work, many of their projects were clouded with difficulties. Few of them could be interviewed, however, because they had already disappeared or ceased to exist. They were also not available to provide any follow-up to the activities they had implemented. Some of the pre-existing NGOs faced problems too, as they had few resources and had to struggle to keep their programmes going. In the absence of follow-up, questions arose around the sustainability of reintegration efforts. The activities, both of 'pocket NGOs' and more institutionalised agencies, were often of a short-term nature, and many ex-combatants had difficulty sustaining themselves afterwards.

Thirdly, there are inherent difficulties associated with the multitude and diversity of NGOs. Fragmented, uncoordinated efforts and outright competition are no exception. Competition, moreover, tends to take place on a tilted playing field. As became particularly clear in the DRC case, INGOs tend to have better access to donor funding and they have more capacities to administer aid, while CBOs and national NGOs are more marginalised. The diversity of NGOs is thus difficult to manage, but efforts to create oversight and order entail their own problems. As mentioned above, foreign NGOs often act as interlocutors in a chain system, where aid is passed down over numerous layers. The DRC case study discussed examples where layers were inserted without adequate reason: a project would be implemented with less money because of the costs of an additional interlocutor. The chain system also tends to move decision-makers and beneficiaries further apart and thus impedes contextual sensitivity and strengthens top-down approaches. Ideally, local NGOs benefit from capacity building and training by agencies higher up in the funding stream, but few positive examples came forward from the case studies.

Fourthly, it is questionable whether NGOs are more efficient than private companies in implementing DDR-related activities. The Ituri example demonstrates that many national agencies and international organisations tend to be crippled by lengthy bureaucratic procedures, and subsequent delays may create frustration and instability. Smaller NGOs furthermore do not have the logistical capacity, cash reserves or well-trained staff to take on highly complex operations involving large numbers of ex-combatants. In Ituri, donors thus resorted to a company, which was able to process large numbers quickly. In other Congolese cases, larger INGOs bypassed local NGOs and implemented the work themselves to compete more effectively with private sector actors bidding for the same projects. Consequently, local NGOs in the DRC were either dependent 'implementing partners' in a chain system or simply left out due to increased competition on a tilted playing field in the funding market. The situation in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone was different. Several local NGOs were involved in DDR and they were often able to access government or donor funding directly.

7 Conclusions

DDR has emerged as a common, if not standard, component of war-to-peace transitions in intra-state conflicts. Excess arms and combatants are a vital challenge in consolidating peace and the need for a programme that addresses this pertinent issue in a sustainable way is widely acknowledged. It has also become clear that DDR is an enduring, multidimensional process that taps into wider military, political, economic and social processes. The case studies executed in this research underlined the difference between process and programme. DDR is a societal process in which members of armed groups adopt diverging strategies to survive in their new context. A DDR programme aims to guide and accelerate this process, but DDR also happens before, outside, and after the activities that formally carry this label, and sometimes rearmament and remobilisation occur as well.

The case studies confirmed earlier research and policy documents saying that DDR is difficult and involves many obstacles and controversies. The programmes in Afghanistan, DRC and Sierra Leone faced numerous challenges, including continued or re-escalating violence, political opposition, depleted state capacity, lack of economic opportunities for ex-combatants and societal issues of enmity and injustice. Particularly in Afghanistan and the DRC, where warfare continues, DDR has been difficult. In Afghanistan DDR of the Northern Alliance was relatively successful, but the difficulties lie with other armed groups. DDR in the DRC has produced some impressive statistics, but ground realities reveal that actual accomplishments have been modest. Although the case of Sierra Leone leaves more room for optimism, it was far from a success story.

Academic and policy literature also highlights the numerous programmatic difficulties of DDR. The case studies corroborated the challenges of dealing with special groups such as ex-CAAFG and ex-WAAFG and the obstacles to effective reintegration. Many of the problems identified in earlier cases thus remain unresolved in practice.

DDR is a multi-actor exercise. Typically, the lead is taken by a newly created government body, while international actors provide technical (usually UN) and financial (World Bank and bilateral donors) support. These actors are usually not mandated and not able to cater for the implementation of the programme, the reintegration component in particular, and so help is sought from NGOs, CBOs, private contractors and local artisans, craftsmen and other entities. It became clear from this study that the involvement of NGOs is vital for the execution of at least parts of DDR. This is also a widely accepted fact in policy frameworks, such as the IDDRS.

The case studies confirmed some of the strengths commonly attributed to NGOs. Clearly there are crucial differences between agencies and contexts, but many NGOs possessed experience and expertise with regard to capacity building, training, rehabilitation and community mobilisation; a strong field presence; the ability to connect to other local actors and local customs and practices; and a tendency to work with women and children. Importantly, these virtues closely correspond with some of the common flaws and deficiencies of DDR. NGOs therefore have something to contribute towards improved DDR practice. Other obstacles to DDR, such as political opposition or insecurity, lie outside the realm of NGO activities and abilities. Some of these challenges, in fact, lie beyond the capacity of DDR at large, as literature and experience suggest that a DDR programme cannot drive military and political change. The difficulties in the Afghan case, for example, confirmed that the success of DDR is contingent on political willingness and the military calculus of armed groups; DDR can only help consolidate peace and security. How important the contribution of NGOs to DDR is also depends on the perspective taken. A spoiler contingency perspective emphasizes the military dimensions of DDR and pursues short-term objectives such as separating the most powerful troublemakers from their guns. A transitional or transformational perspective, however, brings to the foreground the importance of longer-term integration of ex-combatants in society and wider changes in society, in a way that will eventually put guns out of use. The potential role of NGOs clearly increases with these latter perspectives.

More concretely, the studies identified four ways in which NGOs were involved in DDR: international advocacy towards better DDR policy and practice; implementation of DDR activities; administration and guidance of other DDR implementers by interlocutors; and complementary activities, which contribute to DDR though they are not part of the formal DDR programme. Some of Cordaid's partners were also engaged in these activities, but the majority had limited involvement or none at all. Involvement with DDR strongly differed per component of the programme. While engagement in disarmament was limited or absent, NGOs participated more prominently in demobilisation and were widely involved in the process of socio-economic reintegration. However, particularly in Afghanistan only a portion of all the NGOs were involved. With regard to ex-CAAFG, NGOs (in collaboration with UNICEF) were driving demobilisation and reintegration at large, while involvement with disarmament was limited to monitoring and screening. Afghanistan was an exception here, but the number of ex-CAAFG enrolling for DDR was very limited in this country.

A fifth possible way NGOs could be involved concerns their role as a representative of society and a counterweight to the state. This contribution, however, proved to be strikingly absent in the three DDR processes studied. NGOs had no influence to speak of on the design of the programme. Eligibility criteria, DDR benefits, time frames, locations, reintegration options, the guidance on offer to ex-combatants, and budgetary aspects were decided in a centralised manner. No substantive evidence was found of consultation with civil society or significant customisation towards local circumstances or requirements. It would thus be euphemistic to speak of civil society involvement, as NGOs basically served as contractors. They typically implemented rather standardised programmes. They had limited room and made limited efforts to consult with beneficiaries and communities, even though it was often clear that there were problems with the standards set and approaches adopted.

This was one of the main weaknesses identified in the way NGOs contributed to DDR. NGOs revealed a tendency to replicate and propagate systemic flaws. Because they fell in line with top-down, blueprint approaches, NGOs became responsible for some of the key programmatic shortcomings of DDR, such as inadequate training and toolkits, neglect of certain areas or groups, a lack of sensitivity to local needs and delays in delivery (partly due to stalled funding). NGOs also fell victim to numerous conceptual flaws that hampered the adequate implementation of DDR processes in the countries studied: lack of knowledge about socio-economic conditions and local labour markets, and a dearth of innovative perspectives on how to kick-start employment for ex-fighters in war and post-war economies. A second weakness concerned the limited institutional capacity of local NGOs in particular. Local NGOs generally lacked financial reserves, logistical capacities and sufficiently trained staff. Capacity-building efforts (if present at all) did not resolve this problem. Particularly problematic were the so-called pocket NGOs which were created in response to lucrative contracts, but which lacked the reputation, expertise, dedication and durability to deliver proper results. Thirdly, the numerous and diverse nature of the NGO scene inevitably raises problems of oversight, coordination, and consistency. Institutional survival tactics, competition between agencies and inequalities between local and international NGOs were problems as well. There was hardly a level playing field and particularly in the DRC, INGOs were better poised to win bidding procedures. Foreign agencies therefore often acted as interlocutors, and the resulting chain system raised overhead costs while increasing the number of layers between decision-makers and beneficiaries. In the DRC this system also marginalised national and local NGOs, as they ended up at the lower end of the chain or were simply ignored.

Deliberate non-involvement with DDR was common in Afghanistan. It was less of an issue for NGOs in the DRC and had largely moved to the background in Sierra Leone. Three main reasons came forward: 1) DDR was perceived as a military issue outside the NGO mandate, 2) the fear of politicisation and security threats related to it and 3) the fact that NGOs had other priorities – assisting victims rather than perpetrators – or activities that better suited their abilities. It became clear, though, that involvement with DDR is not a black and white issue. As discussed, DDR is primarily a process that occurs in different

parts of society, one that is more encompassing and longer-lasting than a formal DDR programme. The data gathered in this research thus highlight the need to ‘unpack’ DDR and assess the many in-betweens of NGO engagement. In other words, depending on the circumstances and preferences, NGO contributions to DDR can be focused on the different components of DDR; more or less intensive; and through the formal programme or in a more indirect, complementary manner. Many of the NGOs that did not take part in the DDR programme had ex-combatants among the beneficiaries of their projects. In the two African cases, NGOs initiated projects that deliberately targeted the shortfalls and deficiencies of DDR, i.e. additional training or assistance to those who were unduly excluded from DDR benefits. The latter group often included ex-CAAFG and ex-WAAFG. Moreover, some NGOs creatively combined DDR projects with other activities, e.g. in the form of joint vocational training (ex-combatants and others), merged care for youngsters (ex-CAAFG and other unaccompanied children) or community programmes that included social and economic aspects of DDR. Finally, it was reported that NGOs had ex-combatants among their staff, in the field of security (guards, de-miners) or as general project officers.

The research thus suggests the need for ‘DDR sensitivity’: a general awareness of the DDR process in its widest sense and alertness to opportunities to make a positive contribution. This also brings us back to the multi-actor nature of DDR. Government agencies, the UN, the World Bank, bilateral technical agencies such as GTZ, private contractors and local artisans may all have a role to play. The role of NGOs in DDR depends on how they can best complement these actors. Evidence from the case studies suggests that such strategic considerations did not play a leading role. Rather, NGOs mainly acted either as simple contractors to process caseloads of ex-combatants in a standardised manner, or they shied away from direct involvement in formal DDR programmes. Meanwhile, important obstacles to veritable reintegration hinge on errors and insensitivities in the way these projects are carried out. Though contextual difficulties and NGO weaknesses will continue to be a challenge, future DDR programmes would benefit from greater and better involvement of NGOs in DDR programmes and processes. With regard to the conceptual design of DDR programmes, this study suggests the need for a more consultative, less top-down approach with a more prominent role for NGOs. With regard to implementation, the study underlines that NGOs presently fulfil key activities in DDR, but numerous problems – such as lack of capacity, poor coordination and competition, and even corruption – need to be addressed.

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List of abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
BICC	Bonn International Centre for Conversion
CAAFG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCA	Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CONADER	Commission National pour la Démobilisation et la Réintégration
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (of ex-combatants)
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
DPKO	(UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GOLIAG	Government official linked to an illegal armed group
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAG	Illegal armed group
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDDRS	Integrated DDR Standards
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ICG	International Crisis Group
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPA	International Peace Academy
MDRP	Multi-country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMC	Private military company
RUF	Rebel United Front
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SIDDR	Swedish Initiative for DDR
SSR	Security System Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAAFG	Women Associated with Armed Forces and Groups