

**Female Soldiers and Post-Conflict
Reconstruction: Towards an Evidence-Based
Approach for Disarmament, Demobilization and
Reintegration**

**by
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Abstract

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes are a central pillar of post-conflict interventions. These interventions are designed with the intention of helping soldiers in their transition from war to peace. With females now participating in large numbers in conflicts around the world, it is essential to critically analyze their roles in conflict as well as their experiences in subsequent DDR programmes in order to ensure programme effectiveness.

This paper will explore the various roles of women in African warfare and their experiences with DDR programmes. We will provide a critical assessment of previous programmes to understand whether DDR has effectively been facilitating post-conflict reintegration and whether or not women and men experience DDR programmes differently. As women continue to play important roles in African conflicts and the challenges facing peace and development practitioners are only likely to grow, now is the time to take the necessary steps to improve current practice.

Keywords: Post-conflict reconstruction; Africa; female soldiers; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

Dedication

To every woman in Africa whose life has been affected by conflict.

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Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Acronyms.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Case Selection.....	3
1.2. Thesis and Methodology.....	5
2. Theoretical Framework.....	7
2.1. Definitions.....	9
2.1.1. Disarmament.....	9
2.1.2. Demobilization.....	9
2.1.3. Reintegration.....	9
2.2. DDR and Female Soldiers.....	11
3. Case Studies.....	14
3.1. Sierra Leone.....	15
3.2. Liberia.....	18
3.3. Analysis and Lessons Learned.....	21
4. Moving Forward: Towards Evidence-Based Interventions.....	23
4.1. Adopting Appropriate Measurement Strategies.....	24
4.2. Improving Monitoring and Evaluation.....	26
5. DDR and Gender Relations: Setting Realistic Expectations.....	28
5.1. The Significance of Culture and Context.....	29
5.2. Rethinking the Reintegration Phase.....	30
6. Conclusion.....	32
References.....	33

List of Acronyms

DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
INGOS	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
RUF	United Revolutionary Front
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WAFFs	Women Associated with Fighting Forces

1. Introduction

The number of women participating in African conflicts has grown substantially over the last twenty years. The presence of these female soldiers has been documented extensively; however, comprehensive research of their experiences during post-conflict reconstruction is lacking. As men and women experience war differently, there is a concern that the current design of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes do not take the specific needs of women into consideration throughout the entire process, making their reintegration back into civil society much more difficult than men. Unfortunately, these claims have been largely untested and therefore rest on weak empirical grounds. While it is important for intervention strategies to consider a gender perspective during the aftermath of conflict, undertaking this exercise without strong evidence may create a distorted picture of the reality, sequentially leading to harmful policy implications in post-conflict programming.

Although international involvement in demobilizing warring factions spans over a decade, very few evaluation efforts have been attempted to measure the success of female reintegration and whether or not DDR is responsible for that reintegration. Few reports relate the causal factors contributing to any reintegration or whether or not female soldiers experience more difficulty than males in doing so. Humphreys and Weinstein believe that this problem stems from improper evaluations and claim that:

At the macro-level, studies of DDR often neglect to engage in a comparison of outcomes between countries that receive interventions and those that do not receive interventions. Moreover, at the micro-level, many studies also fail to examine why some individuals and not others are able to successfully reintegrate after conflict and whether participation in DDR accounts for this variation. (Humphreys and Weinstein 2005: 2)

Even without evidence of the effectiveness of DDR programmes, previous efforts¹ are being recognized as international successes and continue to be exported and replicated in other post-conflict environments. Additionally, there is still disagreement whether DDR “should be envisioned on a continuum, one that extends from a narrow minimalist (establishing security) to a broad maximalist (an opportunity for development) perspective” (Muggah 2009: 14). For example, many argue that DDR programming should use the opportunity of social upheaval caused by war to help redefine gender relations in a more gender equitable way (El Jack 2004: 4). Even with these impending challenges, DDR continues to be an expanding enterprise, continuously adding new initiatives, which may not always be complementary.

This research project will challenge the basis for the frequently made suggestion that DDR should incorporate a gender perspective² and an ambitious, transformative reintegration agenda into its interventions. We will bring together research that challenges the core assumptions of much of the current DDR enterprise and explore the possibilities of improving practice.

The presence of female soldiers in war zones is becoming integral to the study of African conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction, making it increasingly necessary to critically analyze women’s roles in conflict as well as their experiences in DDR programmes. Proper analysis could help shape how to effectively deal with all soldiers during post-conflict reconstruction. More so, it could assess the progress and success levels of DDR programmes for these female combatants, and also encourage ideas linked to increasing the likelihood of sustainable and effective peace. As women

¹ At the macro-level, “Sierra Leone’s DDR process is widely regarded as a success story, and elements of the Sierra Leone model were replicated in Liberia, Burundi, and Haiti. Participation rates in the DDR programme in Sierra Leone were high and peace has been maintained in the country since the war came to an end. However, little attention has been paid to whether or not the programme was similarly successful at the individual level” (Solomon & Ginifer 2008: 2).

² This implies “making women’s needs, concerns and experiences an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres” (UNIFEM 2004).

continue to play critical roles in African conflicts and the challenges facing peace and development practitioners are only likely to grow, now is the time to take the necessary steps to improve current practice.

1.1. Case Selection

With the increasing involvement of female soldiers in African conflicts, practitioners and policymakers are beginning to focus greater attention on these women who have actively participated in all aspects of the wars and how to best facilitate their transition to peace. Women have been active participants of conflict in wars all over Africa³ and sometimes make up a substantial minority⁴ (Coulter et al. 2008: 8). Women in Africa are frequently employed in national armies or engage in state-sanctioned violence and have also largely participated in insurgencies or rebel movements (Lindsey 2000). In some instances, for these women joining the army may be the only viable option for survival or to flee oppression. Others may also choose to enlist in order to gain the rights and liberties that are equal to men. In fact, multiple African liberation and revolutionary movements fight for women's rights or include a gender equality mandate in their fight for political change (Bouta 2005).

Until recently, women and men of war have often been "positioned at opposite ends of a moral continuum. Women are considered peaceful and men aggressive, women passive and men active" (Coulter et al. 2008: 6). While males may be responsible for performing the majority of violent acts, females have demonstrated that they are more than capable in participating in these types of activities as well. It is even documented that female soldiers often tend to be more "cruel" or "cold-blooded" than

³ Countries include Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe (Coulter et al. 2008: 8).

⁴ Although estimated figures of women involved in war are an underestimation, the findings reveal that in Sierra Leone, for example, 13,202 out of the estimated 75,800 combatants were women and in Liberia the total estimate of women are 22,370 out of a total of 101,495 combatants (Lahai 2010).

male combatants when committing acts of terror and torture. Thus during conflict, women participants may be considered a perpetrator as well as a victim, making the female experience of war both multifaceted and complex (Ibid: 40).

Female involvement in African conflicts is quite diverse. The most recent definition of females involved in armed conflict provided by the United Nations (UN) include female combatants who participate as active combatants using arms, female supporters who participate in supportive roles due to their economic and social dependence of the armed force, and female dependents that are part of an ex-combatant household.⁵ Therefore, not only do some females fulfill combat roles in their lifetime, but some may also take on the role of an administrator, porter, doctor, spy, cook, partner and sex slave, amongst others. In most cases, it remains true that men have generally held leading positions in warring factions in Africa. However, there has been opportunity for a small number of women to also hold high positions of authority⁶ (De Watteville 2002). Therefore, these types of influential positions are unique to a conflict setting and would most likely not be accessible to women outside of the war.

In many situations of conflict, female soldiers have literally grown up in warfare, which has certainly shaped their lives in numerous ways. The different experiences of women in wars and their contribution to the economic, political and social spheres of post-conflict transformation are important to any nation recovering from war. Reintegration of female soldiers is a micro-level problem that needs to be analyzed with the individual in mind. Therefore, acknowledging the different experiences of females in organized violence is important in order to deconstruct commonly held stereotypes of gender-appropriate behaviour as well as assumptions of gender specific needs in post-conflict programming.

⁵ Due to the multiple and complex roles performed during conflict, females often fall into one or more category.

⁶ Martina Johnson in the National Patriotic front of Liberia (NPFL), Ruth Milton in the Liberia Peace council (LPC) and "Black Diamond" in the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) are some well-known female commanders from the Liberian civil war (Ellis 2007:144).

1.2. Thesis and Methodology

This paper is chiefly concerned with the peace and security of female soldiers and former soldiers during the post-conflict period, or more specifically, whether DDR programmes are effectively contributing to the reintegration process of female soldiers.⁷ To that end, it will focus on whether or not female soldiers have a more difficult time reintegrating than male soldiers and whether or not a gender perspective needs to be implemented into DDR programming. Currently, there has been very little evidence to suggest whether DDR has been able to achieve all of its objectives. While there is evidence that suggests success in disarmament and demobilization in programmes, there is very little evidence suggesting the effectiveness of the reintegration phase. Specifically, there has been little research to determine whether or not the reintegration of soldiers would have been realized to the same extent with or without participation in DDR programmes.

With or without evidence, concern for women involved in warfare, and the society they return to, is more than warranted. However, until there is better empirical evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of DDR programming or the need to implement a gender perspective into its design, an approach that implies a more ambitious, transformative reintegration agenda for female ex-combatants should be avoided. In adopting an evidence-based approach, DDR will be able to determine if and where it can make immediate policy improvements in order to achieve realistic objectives to improve future practice.

While we are looking at the evidence critically, we are not suggesting that a gender perspective is unnecessary during post-conflict reconstruction. Rather, we are concerned with how effective the current model of DDR has been and whether or not it has the responsibility or capacity to undertake a transformative developmental initiative that current literature is suggesting. The different roles and experiences of males and

⁷ Pugel believes that “this long-term endeavour pursues the requisite societal, economic, political and psychological outcomes for sustained peace, prosperity and progress” (Pugel 2009: 79).

females during warfare and DDR programmes require further analysis in order for DDR programmes to be constructed according to the needs of those involved. The questionable impact of DDR programmes and the individual context of each post-conflict environment lead us to believe that proposing change in the current gender inequalities may be more appropriate to execute separately from DDR.

The analysis below draws upon data obtained from academic articles and journals, UN documents, the Human Security Report database and large-scale systematic data collection and research provided primarily by Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) in Sierra Leone and Pugel (2006) in Liberia.

The paper will proceed in five sections. Section 2 will provide an overview of the DDR enterprise and where female soldiers fit within it. Then, Section 3 will provide a critical assessment of the only two research studies that systematically evaluate the components of the DDR programmes that were implemented in Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as provide an examination of whether or not females and males experienced these programmes differently.⁸ Drawing on the evidence provided from the case studies in Section 3, Section 4 and 5 will offer insight on how to improve the current DDR model through the adoption of appropriate measurement strategies, improvement in monitoring and evaluation practices and narrowing the scope by setting more realistic expectations to achieve more tangible objectives. Section 6 will present the conclusion.

⁸ It is important to note that the analysis and conclusions drawn from the case studies in Section 3 are derived from only two research projects performed in two countries. Although these rigorous data collection studies are unique to the field for their reliance on the macro- as well as micro-level indicators, the results do not mean that their findings can be generalized for every DDR programme.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the early 1990s, the United Nations introduced disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes to aid soldiers in the very difficult transition from war to peace (UN IDDRS). A DDR programme typically consists of a series of carefully designed activities intended to help to create a stable security environment necessary for development to begin. DDR pursues the voluntary disarmament and demobilization of combatants from armed groups, and facilitates the beginning of their new lives by finding a place in society (Kilroy 2009: 1). Since its introduction, more than sixty DDR initiatives have taken place (Muggah 2010: 1). Owing in large part to the scale and brutality of conflicts and conflict terminations on the continent, almost two-thirds of all DDR operations have been launched in African countries (Ibid 2009: 6).

DDR programmes are supported primarily by the international aid community and have become a central pillar of peace operations. The DDR process lays the foundations for the sustainable reintegration for soldiers and “has the potential to create an environment in which the political and social reconciliation, social and economic rehabilitation, and long- term development can begin” (Ball 2006: 1). However, these processes have a limited capacity to influence political and security objectives and should not be viewed as a substitute for inadequate peace enforcement activities on behalf of the parties in conflict. More importantly, DDR was not originally intended to produce development. DDR should be seen as just the first step on the long road to recovery and reconstructing new order and should not be seen as the last step of something that has ceased to be (Gamba 2006: 74).

When DDR was introduced, it had a specific set of objectives that were designed to establish a post-conflict environment that was both stable and secure. As the 1990s unfolded, DDR programmes began to introduce a growing array of ever-expanding objectives, and operations began to multiply in reach as well as in number.

Donors also began to support the linking of DDR with other thematic priorities including law and justice reform, police re-training and re-deployment, and the strengthening of government institutions. In short, DDR was becoming a hamper into which many priorities were being added. Now DDR has become a complex operation that involves dozens of agencies. Due to the numerous challenges that occur with coordinating systems and institutions in highly charged environments, an intense debate has emerged over whether or not DDR should be narrowly or broadly conceived. Like many aspects of peace building, efforts to bridge security and development, while important, also pose significant challenges.

Numerous DDR programmes have officially been completed, and policy initiatives have surfaced in hopes to distil lessons learned from previous practice. In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the need to foster better cooperation and coordination amongst all of its components and actors in the DDR process. This recognition led to the creation of a UN interagency working group that generated a set of Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)⁹ (UN 2006). The multidimensional approach was based on macro-level analyses of DDR programming and offers the newest guidelines in regards to planning, implementing and evaluating for all future DDR programmes. The IDDRS marked the beginning of a UN effort to provide future programmes with integrated approaches that will consider not only the security and peace building efforts of interventions, but also the development needs of a post-conflict environment (Molloy 2008). Creating better synergy between the various components within DDR may seem reasonable in theory; however, once put in practice, it is quite challenging, highly complex and may not necessarily be very effective or even workable.

⁹ The Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) are defined as “a comprehensive set of policies, guidelines and procedures covering 24 areas of DDR. The IDDRS consolidate policy guidance on DDR, providing a United Nations integrated approach on the planning, management and implementation of DDR processes. They are also the most complete repositories and best practices drawn from the experience of all United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes involved in DDR. The IDDRS are accompanied by the DDR Briefing Note to Senior Managers and the Operational Guide to the IDDRS” (UN IDDRS). For full description, please see <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/>

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. *Disarmament*

The UN defines disarmament as “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. It also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes” (UN 2006: 8). Aside from weapons collection, disarmament also identifies and registers all combatants and assesses these individuals based on their central needs and requirements.

2.1.2. *Demobilization*

Demobilization is an extension of the disarmament phase as both processes create the first steps in preparing soldiers for the initial stage in their return to civilian life. While disarmament collects weapons and registers all combatants, demobilization serves as the official discharge of all individuals from armed groups. This fundamental stage involves amassing combatants in assembly or cantonment areas and frequently involves disbursing transitional allowances for all ex-combatants until a sustainable livelihood is found¹⁰ (Ginifer et al. 2004: 3). By formally disbanding military organizations, much of the community, distinction and economic possibilities that may have been developed through participating in the conflict will be lost and may be of profound concern to these individuals in the post-conflict environment (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005: 2).

2.1.3. *Reintegration*

The UN defines reintegration as, “the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially

¹⁰ Due to the financial allowances provided at this stage, this component of DDR is often scrutinized both internationally and by local communities as it can be viewed as rewarding fighters for their participation in conflicts, while others affected by war receive no special help.

a social and economic process with an open-time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level” (UN 2006: 8). Over the years, a development component of the reintegration phase has increasingly been emphasized, but it tends to be under-resourced and relatively short-term. This has brought a disjunction between the security and development components of DDR. The security phase of DDR which primarily takes place during disarmament and demobilization is well-funded and implemented primarily by the military. In contrast, the development phase of DDR that takes place during reintegration is primarily funded and implemented by international non-government organizations (INGOS) and development agencies that have considerably fewer resources and a much more ambitious agenda (Ginifer et al. 2004: 5). Consequently, reintegration has been unable to yield any conclusive outcomes and analysts and policy makers are increasingly asking whether or not a developmental aspect should be incorporated into the reintegration phase at all.

When examining all the phases of DDR, it is clear that it is reintegration that remains the greatest challenge. After disarmament and demobilization, non-rehabilitated and largely uneducated soldiers return to their war-ravaged communities. Mostly without the necessary skills to gain employment or a sustainable livelihood, and long-isolated from non-military social networks, re-establishing a civilian way of life is a long uphill battle for these individuals. With few economic opportunities available, many are then left unemployed and disillusioned (Kilroy 2009:2).

Although there are short-term consequences to reintegration failure, which may lead to the continuation of fighting, the long-term consequences are more detrimental for the country at large. Without proper social or economic reintegration, not only do former soldiers contribute little but they may turn in desperation to crime as a livelihood. Policy makers continue to deliberate over the projected results from the reintegration phase, what should, and should not be included in wider recovery programmes (Specker 2008; Muggah 2009). The key issue in dispute here is the degree to whether or not the DDR processes should focus primarily on short-term, security goals, or embrace a more long-term developmental approach.

Part of the problem is practical. Mandated UN operations have often lacked the expertise or resources to undertake what have become increasingly complex and

ambitious DDR programmes successfully (Muggah 2009:12). In part as a consequence, some DDR proponents argue that narrowly-conceived targets such as the collection of a specific stock of weapons or demobilizing a precise group of ex-combatants are what is needed and what can produce measurable outcomes. This may be true, but such activities in themselves do very little to improve security or rehabilitation of former soldiers. This is why other proponents of DDR stress the importance of the integration phases and a greater focus on development issues.

2.2. DDR and Female Soldiers

The inclusion of female ex-combatants in DDR programmes has come under increased scrutiny within the last few years. The women who register in DDR programmes in Africa are small in number, and far fewer than the actual number of female soldiers. McKay and Mazurana (2003) found that the majority of women, who had participated in the conflicts in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda, did not participate in the DDR programmes that followed. For example, only 6.5 percent of all participants in the DDR programme in Sierra Leone were women, despite previous estimates stating the number of females involved in the conflict was up to 30 percent (McKay & Mazurana 2003: 13).

Until recently, DDR programmes have had a tendency to assume that all combatants were male, thus leading to low female participation in DDR programmes. Specker (2008) argues that the UN definition of what precisely constitutes an ex-combatant, as well as the restrictive eligibility criteria used in DDR programmes, is the main reason why women are underrepresented in the process. Other speculations include the marginalization by different commanders, fear of stigmatization or lack of information about the programmes among would-be female participants (Ibid: 9). Although the increased participation of women in warfare is now well understood, the design of DDR programmes still chooses to see these women predominantly as victims (Coulter et al. 2008: 40). This has led the international community to focus on the more dangerous or socio-culturally, valued male in DDR programmes (Maulden 2011). A key challenge for DDR programmes, as well as the complementary development assistance programmes, is to include all women who have participated in conflict, irrespective of

whether or not they took part in actual combat (De Watteville 2002; Barth 2002; Bouta 2005).

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was introduced in part to focus on better addressing the needs of women in DDR programming¹¹ (UN 2000). Yet, more than a decade later, women continue to be marginalized in DDR programmes and approaches to identifying, registering, demobilizing and reintegrating female fighters remain largely ineffective (Coulter et al. 2008: 40). Despite the newfound official concern for addressing the needs of women in DDR programmes, fears of dangerous and potentially violent men continue to drive the DDR programme focus (Zuckerman & Greenberg 2004).

With regard to gender relations, many DDR proponents see the postwar era as an opportunity for change and a chance to use new policy and legislation to rewrite the social norms and inequalities that may exist (Coulter 2005). Others warn about the dangers of overstatement. Utas (2003: 221) writes that, “although women have been exposed to new realities during war, stating that their roles in society have changed drastically seems rather exaggerated.” Gender not only refers to biology, but to the socially constructed identities of males and females. These roles are defined early in the socialization process and shape the acceptable responsibilities and roles of men and women.

Lacking understanding of what women in armed groups actually do in war, and what their needs may be during the post-conflict era, programmes have often been designed based on the western assumptions of what their needs may be. For example, Coulter (2005) found that programmes in Sierra Leone that focused on serving marginalized and stigmatized girls, made trauma healing a priority, in order for the women to deal with emotions from their experiences at war. While this may be important,

¹¹ Paragraph 13 of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) encourages “all those involved in the planning of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration need to consider the different needs of female and male combatants and their dependents in DDR initiatives” (UNSC 2000).

the majority of female participants felt they did not benefit from such programmes. What was too often missing was provision of training in livelihood skills. Furthermore, when organizations did provide skills-training courses they focused on skills that would make the females more independent and self-reliant, failing to realize that few who graduated were able to live independently (Coulter 2005: 15). Therefore, while adopting a gender perspective is critically important when dealing with female soldiers in post-conflict situations, that perspective has to be sensitive to the particular needs of the young women in question.

3. Case Studies

DDR programmes are loaded with complexities, and have yielded mixed results. In many post-conflict societies where DDR programmes have been implemented, peace has been maintained. But there is little evidence suggesting that the absence of war was *caused* by DDR programming, as against simply being associated with it.

Until recently, few systematic efforts had examined DDR programme outcomes systematically to try and understand the precise determinants of the successful reintegration (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005: 3). It has been argued that, “there is a fundamental absence of disaggregated longitudinal baseline data with which to render statistically valid analysis or estimations” (Muggah 2009: 15). With these kinds of data gaps in the studies on DDR programmes, our understanding and awareness of the impact that the programmes have on former soldiers is limited. This, in turn, has often led to post-conflict programming basing itself on popular myths, immediate needs, rules of thumb and possibly mistaken assumptions concerning what should be provided. In the rush to implement interventions quickly, many micro-level determinants are not adequately acknowledged by decision-makers and practitioners. Recent research undertaken in Sierra Leone and Liberia has provided new findings as to whether or not DDR programmes can assist reintegration on the individual level.

Sierra Leone and Liberia are neighbouring countries where the percentage of women in armed groups is among the highest in the world. Women and girls participated in large numbers in both conflicts, often involuntarily. However, the peace processes of Sierra Leone and Liberia differed in how they incorporated a gender perspective in the official DDR documents. The peace process in Sierra Leone began with the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999 and was then implemented over a few years, until an official peace agreement was signed in January 2002. The process had therefore started before the passage of UNSCR 1325 and was not informed by a gender perspective. By contrast, the DDR process in Liberia was initiated in 2003, after the adoption of UNSCR 1325,

and embodied a gender perspective into many elements of the peace agreement. An examination of this difference will demonstrate whether or not the inclusion of a gender perspective in the aftermath of UNSCR 1325 had an impact on female soldier reintegration within their respective countries.

3.1. Sierra Leone

The United Revolutionary Front (RUF), a small insurgency, began the war in Sierra Leone in 1999 when they decided to rebel against the country's government. Over the next ten years, the group participated in the killing and displacement of thousands of civilians. Fortunately, both parties eventually came to an agreement, and the Sierra Leonean President and the leader of the RUF signed the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999. This gave the RUF leader a vice-presidency position in a transitional government, while granting amnesty for all RUF members. Shortly after, thousands of rebels and civilians fled to the capital, overwhelming the capacities and capabilities of many local aid agencies that were attempting to implement various development and reconstruction programmes. At this time, the United Nations launched its mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), taking the lead in disarming and demobilizing all of the warring factions (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005: 10). By the time of its completion, the DDR programme in Sierra Leone had collected over 45,000 weapons and in January 2002, the war was declared officially over. (Mazurana & Carlson 2004: 16)

The exact number of females who participated in the war is unknown, but it is estimated to range from 10 percent to as high as 30 percent (McKay & Mazurana 2003). Although the majority of females had been abducted, there were many who joined the war voluntarily. Mackenzie (2009) found that the women had diverse roles ranging from sex slaves to active combatants in the various armed groups, even some reaching high ranking commanding positions which certainly defied any simplistic gendered notions about females in combat groups (Ibid: 249). The total number of females to complete the DDR programme in Sierra Leone was 4,751 out of a total of 72,490 participants, which is roughly 6 percent of all fighters (Mazurana & Carlson 2004). The extent of female participation in the conflict was known before the implementation of the DDR

programme, which led many to wonder why so few actually went through the process and some to question the entire DDR enterprise.

Regardless of the low rate of female participation, the DDR programme that operated in Sierra Leone was still recognized as an international success and as a fundamental part of the country's peaceful transition. Yet, some scholars find this praise unwarranted because the DDR programme did not address the specific needs of female soldiers. For example, Mackenzie (2009: 242) argues, "the DDR in Sierra Leone was one of the humanitarian and development policies that served to construct natural, peaceful female subjects in contrast to securitized male soldiers." She believes that the initial problem with Sierra Leone's DDR programme was that mistaken gender assumptions led practitioners to believe female soldiers were not as serious a security concern as their male counterparts. She argues that a more inclusive, gender perspective could have helped to better integrate female soldiers in the process. However, Mackenzie provided little empirical evidence to support her assertions.

Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) carried out an empirical study in Sierra Leone shortly after the DDR programme was completed to assess the reintegration of ex-combatants in the country.¹² Their study was unique in its kind since it sought to identify not only the effect of DDR programmes on reintegration, but also the relative importance of personal experiences and characteristics of soldiers in reintegration (Muggah 2009).

Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) interviewed some one thousand ex-combatants from Sierra Leone's five warring factions. A total of 1,043 interviews were completed, including both participants and non-participants in the formal DDR process. The study focused on four outcome measurements: the extent to which soldiers maintained ties with factions, access to employment, ability to trust the democratic

¹² This research draws on a large survey led by the authors with the Post-conflict Reintegration Initiative for Development and Empowerment (PRIDE) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The full treatment of the data and analysis that is summarized in this paper can be found in articles by Humphreys and Weinstein (2004; 2005; 2007;2009).

process and whether or not the combatants felt accepted by their respective communities¹³ (Muggah 2009: 16).

Their study also sought to establish whether there was a difference between the female and male experience during the post-conflict period. Therefore, the survey was strategized to identify a large number of female soldiers, once again both those who had participated in the DDR process and those who had not (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005). Surprisingly, given the numerous claims about the gender related difficulties faced by female combatants in post-conflict environments, Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) found only one significant difference between male and female soldiers. The survey revealed that females were far more likely to break ties with their specific faction than their male counterparts¹⁴ (Ibid: 21). Humphreys and Weinstein found that combatants who had joined army groups voluntarily were less likely to be accepted by their communities in the post-war period. Humphreys and Weinstein argue that because the majority of women in the Sierra Leone conflict were abducted and abused by the RUF, they were more likely to break with their faction and in turn, were more likely to be accepted back into their communities (Ibid 2009: 59). Therefore, while many observers of the conflict in Sierra Leone have drawn attention to the challenges facing women when returning to their communities, these results actually suggest otherwise.

Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) found that the numerous challenges women face during the post-conflict period owes more to their membership of, and roles performed in, the different warring factions rather than to their gender. Instead, the most important determinants of reintegration success were based on the specific role and experience of the individual in war, especially those engaging in abusive practices.

Thus while the qualitative literature places great emphasis on the challenges that women face during reintegration, Humphreys and Weinstein's (2005) quantitative

¹³ For more information on the sampling strategy and a discussion of potential biases in the sample, see Humphreys and Weinstein (2007).

¹⁴ This difference is substantially large and significant at the 99 per cent level (Humphreys & Weinstein 2009: 59).

analysis indicates that gender has no measurable impact on most outcomes. Therefore, although DDR policy in Sierra Leone failed to take gender into account when planning the reintegration programme, this had little impact on how successful women were in reintegrating into their home communities. It was other factors – factors that affected all individuals – in the conflict that proved more influential in determining reintegration success.

By interviewing both former combatants who had undergone the reintegration training and those that hadn't, Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) were able to gauge the effectiveness of the programme. Their key finding was that undergoing the reintegration phase made no difference to the success or failure of former combatants to integrate. Their research found that combatants who were not exposed to any phase of the DDR programme were able to reintegrate just as successfully as those who were (Ibid: 21).

It seems clear then that notwithstanding the international acclaim, there is no evidence that the reintegration part of the DDR programme in Sierra Leone had *any* measurable effect. Instead of a well-planned and executed DDR programme, Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) attribute the post-war reintegration results on the basis that the war ended after a lengthy period of conflict. They believe that “the RUF was defeated decisively; the country was tired of fighting; and there was broad acceptance of the terms of the peace” (Ibid 2004: 45). It was this, and not the DDR programme that determined the reintegration successes.

3.2. Liberia

The deep-rooted conflict in Liberia was intimately linked to the conflict in Sierra Leone. The RUF had staged their plan of attack from Liberia and had been working closely with the Liberian administration in the years leading up to both conflicts. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, brought the country into a civil war that erupted in Liberia in December 1989. The country then endured eight years of bloodshed until Taylor was eventually elected President. At this time, two other insurgencies joined in the rebellion movement seeking to surround and defeat Taylor in the capital of Monrovia.

The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) emerged in 2003 from Guinea and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) emerged at the same time from the eastern part of the country (Solomon & Ginifer 2008). Encircled by the two rebel groups and confronting defeat, Taylor was forced into exile and the war ground to a halt. After the war was over, the UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) led the process of helping Liberia towards the path to renewal.

Since both DDR practitioners and policymakers had hailed the programme in Sierra Leone as a success, it was emulated in Liberia. The Sierra Leonean programme successfully disarmed and demobilized 72,490 rebels, which is no small feat.

Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) had demonstrated that those who successfully reintegrated in Sierra Leone may have done so despite the DDR programme and not because of it. But the conviction in the policy community that the Sierra Leone DDR programme was responsible for the success of all phases of DDR meant that many aspects of its implementation strategies were replicated in Liberia (Solomon & Ginifer 2008).

As in Sierra Leone, women in Liberia also participated in every aspect of the conflict as combatants, supporters and political actors, joining the armed factions both voluntarily and involuntarily (UNIFEM 2004). Specht (2006) conducted a study finding that over one-third of all female participants in the Liberian war were forcibly recruited, while others joined in hopes of survival or protection.

Officially, 101,495 ex-combatants were disarmed and demobilized in Liberia, together with 22,370 women; a significantly higher number than that of the Sierra Leone programme (UN DDR Liberia). Noting the disproportionately small female presence in the Sierra Leone DDR process, the Liberian DDR programme made a major effort to increase the participation rate of women. As in Sierra Leone, the official estimation of female participation in the Liberian civil conflict ranges up to 30 percent. In the DDR programme that followed, 22 percent of all participants were women as opposed to 6 percent in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, the participation of women in the DDR process was still less than their numerical proportion in the actual conflict (Specht 2006).

Unlike the DDR programme in Sierra Leone, the UNAMIL official documents indicate that the unique needs of women were to be considered and that the objectives of UNSCR 1325 would be actively addressed. The primary effect of incorporating gender imperatives into the Liberian DDR programme was to change the eligibility criteria for admission. It was thought that implementing a broader definition of soldier/combatant would allow for more women to register for disarmament and demobilization. Referring to these women as “Women Associated with Fighting Forces” (WAFs) allowed for more women to participate in the DDR process. By changing the eligibility criteria for admission into the DDR programme, women without weapons were able to participate, ensuring the inclusion of over 20,000 women.

Unfortunately in Liberia, a serviceable weapon or ammunition was still required for all males wishing to participate in the DDR programme. The advocates of gender-sensitized programming failed to address instances where male combatants were still barred from the DDR programme. In incorporating a gender perspective into DDR programmes, policy makers and practitioners need to assess the implications that any planned action has on men as well as women, given existing gender roles.

To complement Humphreys and Weinstein’s (2005) research study undertaken in Sierra Leone, Pugel (2006) conducted a similar, nationwide survey in Liberia that focused again on ex-combatants from the different warring factions.¹⁵ The research built upon the Sierra Leonean approach and replicated the methodology employed by Humphreys and Weinstein. By also focusing this examination on measuring the micro-level impact against the micro-level outcomes, Pugel’s initial findings “demonstrate a high degree of convergent validity with the Sierra Leone study. The regression model served to quantify the evaluation accounts for gender, finding no evidence of greater

¹⁵ This research draws on a UNDP-funded empirical study conducted in partnership with the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect. It was designed through a close association with the investigators of the Sierra Leone case study. A replication of the methodology employed for examining micro-level impact on the macro-level outcomes was heavily relied upon for this study in Liberia. The research covered in this report builds upon the approach advanced by Humphreys and Weinstein, but also takes a number of important steps that go beyond the original design. For full report see Pugel (2006; 2007).

problems being associated with female soldier reintegration than males” (Pugel 2006: 68). Furthermore, Pugel’s findings did not uncover any evidence of differences between male and female success in post-conflict reintegration inside Liberian communities (Ibid).

The incorporation of UNSCR 1325 and its gender perspective into the peace process might seem to imply that former female combatants in Liberia would reintegrate better than the female soldiers in Sierra Leone. Pugel found no such difference. Although more women were able to enter the DDR process and disarm and demobilize, there was no substantial difference in their reintegration success. This once again implies that the reintegration phase of DDR may not have had the impact that practitioners and policy makers assume. As was the case in Sierra Leone, reintegration in Liberia may have happened despite the reintegration process rather than because of it.

When measuring the impact of DDR against its outcomes at the individual level, Pugel (2006) came to different conclusions than Humphreys and Weinstein (2005). His empirical evidence shows that the ex-combatants who completed the official DDR programme did in fact reintegrate more successfully than those who chose to reintegrate outside of the programme. Most notable among the differences between the individuals was the significant economic and social advantages that those who went through the programme had over the non-participants. Although Pugel’s findings reveal encouraging results in regards to the impact of DDR programming, he believes his findings should still be met with caution. The profound absence of clarity within the planning and assessment of DDR, and without clear and cogent objectives, Pugel found it difficult to generate appropriate baseline data necessary to test quantifiable outcomes. Therefore, for a proper measurement of the impact of DDR, accurate measures of reintegration outcomes need to be developed, which in turn requires robust baseline data (Pugel 2009).

3.3. Analysis and Lessons Learned

The DDR programmes in Sierra Leone and Liberia both adopted a traditional approach, focusing on the collection of weapons, control and remobilization capacity of

armed factions and the reintegration support of ex-combatants (Molloy 2008:4). Evaluations of the success of the DDR programmes, focused on whether soldiers could be disarmed and formally demobilized and whether or not peace was maintained. Prior to these studies, there had been no rigorous attempt to identify the causal factors of what influenced an individual's ability to reintegrate successfully after conflict. Not surprisingly have there been any similar subsequent studies.

In both case studies, findings derived from standard social science analytical methodology contradicted assumptions of the practitioner (Molloy 2008:12). Their most important finding is that the international interventions, designed to aid former soldiers reintegrate into their home communities, have only achieved minimal success. Although Pugel (2006) found the participants of the DDR programme in Liberia reintegrated somewhat better than non-participants, in Sierra Leone there was no difference between DDR participants and non-participants.

The evidence from these two studies, which have never been repeated elsewhere, strongly suggest that while the DDR enterprise has proven successful at disarming and demobilizing soldiers and preventing wars from restarting, it has little impact on the reintegration phase.

It is both unfortunate and remarkable that the UN has taken so little notice of these studies – and has never attempted to repeat them.

Moreover, the evidence suggests that the insistence that DDR programmes need to become more gender-sensitive needs to be regarded with some scepticism. The Sierra Leone experience demonstrates that women were greatly unrepresented in the DDR programme – a finding that led to a more inclusive approach being incorporated in the DDR process in Liberia (UNIFEM 2004). Yet in terms of outcome, females did not integrate any more successfully in Liberia than Sierra Leone. Adding additional criteria for female eligibility in the DDR programme in Liberia allowed for more females to participate, but did not increase the reintegration success rate. In terms of the impact of DDR reintegration programmes, the evidence suggests that the gender of former fighters was not a significant factor.

4. Moving Forward: Towards Evidence-Based Interventions

The Sierra Leone and Liberia evaluations concerning the impact of DDR programmes are notable for their methodological rigour and reliance on statistical data. Yet, these studies remain the exception rather than the rule. While both studies come to different conclusions regarding the extent to which DDR is a useful tool for ex-combatants, both reveal that female soldiers were not disadvantaged during the DDR process.

In addition, the studies expose the persistent inability of international agencies and national governments to effectively plan, execute and monitor the reintegration phase of DDR interventions. Part of the problem stems from the failure of researchers and practitioners to agree upon how to properly target combatants or how to measure and define reintegration (Muggah et al. 2009).¹⁶

Due to the many layers of competing definitions associated with DDR programmes, it is difficult to find commensurable data on how and whether the enterprise delivers on its promises. Kilroy (2009) believes that the main problems stem from “many decision-makers operating in the security and development sectors who are continually wrestling with the conceptual dimensions of DDR.”

Proper evaluation of DDR programmes requires minimally that concepts, definition and indicators be agreed upon. Clearly, the confusion with respect to the

¹⁶ The expansion of DDR operations around the world has generated a new burden on international peacekeeping operations, international donors and security and development agencies. It is incumbent on these supporters of DDR to issue precise guidance that provides for clear and achievable goals (Pugel 2009: 92).

success of DDR programmes – and the fact that the best evidence we have indicated is that the reintegration phase is deeply flawed – means that practitioners, policy makers and scholars need to revisit approaches to DDR planning, implementation and monitoring. What is needed is far more rigorous analysis of the failures – which in turn requires more systematic impact evaluations like those undertaken by Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) and Pugel (2006).

4.1. Adopting Appropriate Measurement Strategies

Before the monitoring and evaluation of a DDR programme can begin, appropriate metrics for success need to be established. The first priority of DDR programmes is to increase security, making the disarmament and demobilization phase the critical link of the programme. Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) demonstrate that women experience no more difficulty in reintegrating than men, when participating in DDR programmes. However, the low number of women in African DDR programmes has led scholars to argue that women are being neglected by the DDR process (Coulter et al. 2008: 20). A detailed report by UNIFEM (2004) argues that women do not enter into DDR programmes due to the unique needs that are not being accounted for by DDR; issues of stigma, insecurity, or lack of interest of combatants are some of the reasons given. This may be true, but the Sierra Leone and Liberia studies do not indicate that greater inclusion leads to better reintegration.

But clearly greater inclusion is desirable. Even if the *rate* of success remains unchanged, absolute numbers of women will increase if the numbers joining the programme increase. Multiple research studies performed in numerous African counties have found that the low participation is the fault of inaccurate programme targeting.¹⁷ By

¹⁷ In a study conducted by Mazurana (2005) interviewing female soldiers from Angola, Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, she found the primary reason given by these women why they were excluded was because they had not been identified as “combatants.”

using the collection of weapons as a tool or benchmark to measure programme success, the UN has been excluding many men, women and children from DDR programmes.

According to official DDR guidelines, possession of a weapon is required for all conflict participants to be considered as “combatants” and thus eligible to enter a DDR programme. This, in turn, creates a large obstacle for women in the initial demobilization efforts. Coulter (2004) interviewed numerous women in Sierra Leone who had not participated in the DDR programme even though they had wanted to. He discovered more than half of the women were claiming that without possessing a weapon, they were unable to enroll in the programme. Similarly, Mazurana and Carlson (2004) found in their study that 46 percent of female fighters lacking a weapon were unable to go through DDR in Sierra Leone. In these cases, women who may of performed as sex slaves, or who were performing support roles during the conflict were excluded from the programme. Additionally, combatants who were active in combat were turned away simply because their weapons may have been lost or stolen during the decade long and tumultuous conflict in the country (Mackenzie 2009: 251). Specht (2006) observed similar results in the disarmament of ex-combatants in Liberia, even after the UN changed the criteria to be more inclusive. The measurement strategy of DDR in Sierra Leone and Liberia focused on what it could deliver and the number of arms it could collect. But these criteria excluded numerous women who participated in armed groups. The process made DDR programme outputs – e.g. guns handed in – easier to measure, but also excluded females who didn’t meet the narrow criteria.¹⁸

The studies conducted by Mazurana and Carlson (2004), Coulter (2004), Mackenzie (2009) and Specht (2006) point to the failure of DDR policies to adequately target all participants of warfare. However, their studies do not demonstrate that greater inclusion would lead to better reintegration.

¹⁸ For example, DDR was hailed as an international success because it was able to disarm and demobilize 72,490 ex-combatants in Sierra Leone. While this is certainly an accomplishment in itself, the UN used the number of weapons collected to serve as a benchmark for the success of DDR, where in fact, without accounting for levels of reintegration or the extent to which the process improved human security.

Although the current UN Operational Guide to the IDDRS acknowledges that weapon possession should not be the single criterion for eligibility in DDR programmes, female and male members of armed groups continue to be excluded from DDR programmes (Coulter et al. 2008).¹⁹ While disarmament and demobilization is critical to DDR and while metrics on weapons collected and personnel demobilized are obviously critical, setting appropriate metrics of success for the “R” phase of DDR is also critical – and far more difficult. Humphreys and Weinstein (2005: 12), who actually created measurable indicators of reintegration success, nevertheless found that “due to the low correlations between various outcomes and insignificant reliability, measurement of reintegration on one dimension is typically not a good prediction of reintegration on another dimension.” There needs to be measurement targets set for all phases of the DDR process in order to establish not just how many weapons have been collected, but how many individuals were able to reintegrate successfully into civilian life (Solomon & Ginifer 2008: 2). According to Pugel (2009: 79), “clear definitions and appropriate labels can enhance the coherence of doctrine, better align mission objectives to outcome indicators and guide effective monitoring and evaluation.”

4.2. Improving Monitoring and Evaluation

Reflecting on DDR over the past decade Muggah (2010) argues that “in the beginning scholars were preoccupied with the process of DDR as a spatially, temporally and socially bounded activity. Whilst establishing useful conceptual parameters, these researchers seldom considered more fundamental issues of causality and correlation or intervention outcomes.” All evaluation that was performed focused on tangible results – e.g., collection of guns – and programme achievements. In addition, researchers have

¹⁹ Section 5.10.2 of the UN Operational Guide to IDDRS outlines the new eligibility criteria for female soldiers. Although the criteria has changed to be more inclusive, possession or use of a weapon is still a priority for the disarmament and demobilization phases and social and economic dependence of a male is the primary requirement for reintegration phase. For a description of the eligibility criteria for females please see http://unddr.org/docs/Operational_Guide_REV_2010_WEB.pdf

not gathered enough quantitative data using commensurate and consistent definitions and hence have been unable to make meaningful cross-national comparisons of DDR programme outcomes.

While both studies reach some different conclusions in terms of the impact of DDR, Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) and Pugel (2006) have indeed charted a fresh course for investigation on international efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate combatants. Most notably, Humphreys and Weinstein suggest the need for an analytic shift from macro-level to the micro-level.

In order for DDR programmes to be effectively designed in the future, more research is needed on whether or not combatants are able to embrace post-war political order and demonstrate an ability to reintegrate back into their communities. The factors that contribute to this also need to be analyzed (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005). “At the macro-level, this can be done by comparing countries that did or did not have DDR programmes. At the micro-level, this research can be achieved by comparing individuals who did or did not participate in DDR” (Ibid: 3).

The absence of empirical research in policy outcomes in this field is not a minor issue. It has direct implications for the ability of policy makers to accurately evaluate the impact of policy and programmes, thoroughly assess what works and what does not, and affectively channel funding and resources. Theoretically supported empirical findings can help redirect policies that previously have failed to produce desired results (Pugel 2008).

As DDR processes begin to proceed in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan, there is an opportunity to better understand the impact of these programmes. When undertaking this research, “an assessment of the different roles of men and women in armed forces should be an integral part of the general assessment that takes place before DDR programmes start” (Kilroy 2009: 7). But given past practice and the inattention paid to the Humphreys and Weinstein (2005) and Pugel (2006) studies within the policy community, this may not happen.

5. DDR and Gender Relations: Setting Realistic Expectations

In order for a DDR programme to achieve its desired outcomes, it is important that practitioners and policymakers set realistic expectations regarding what can and cannot be accomplished. According to Berdal (1996: 66), since its onset, the general failure to plan and coordinate activities within DDR programmes relates both to the immediate and long-term needs of ex-combatants. Post-conflict environments are incredibly fragile and complicated, making the establishment of security a primary concern. While post-conflict settings can create windows of opportunity through expanding the traditional gender norms, adding an ambitious reintegration agenda to DDR programming that seeks to transform inequitable gender relations should be approached with caution (Muggah 2009). It is not that this goal is undesirable, rather that DDR programmes are too limited to realize it. DDR should instead focus on its primary objective of achieving security, until its performance in this area at both the micro- and macro- level can be established. Unfortunately, international institutions like the World Bank and UNDP tend to endorse broader agendas – like addressing the issue of gender equality – for which DDR programmes and their implementers lack both the expertise and resources. For these reasons, DDR may not be the vehicle to begin a radical transformation of gender structures within a post-conflict state.

The key challenge with respect to gender and post-conflict programming is providing the appropriate assistance to women. In order for that to happen, a more clear division of labour between DDR programmes and complementary development assistance programmes is needed. DDR cannot substitute for large-scale development interventions (Bouta 2005; Muggah 2009). The international community must work with national stakeholders to develop a comprehensive view of what is necessary to support post-settlement military and security transitions in order to ensure cultural sensitivity and recognize that DDR may only be one possible element of a broader package of support (Ball 2006: 7).

5.1. The Significance of Culture and Context

No post-conflict society offers up a blank slate on which international interventions can readily be implemented. Rather, the dynamics of war, the complex factors shaping the mobilization of fighters, and the manner in which peace is negotiated are all critical to the planning and implementation of each DDR programme. Therefore, the political, social, economic and cultural circumstances in which DDR is utilized matter fundamentally (Muggah et al. 2009: 273). While the DDR mission tends to operate from a standardized template, it is critical to realize that these programmes occur in unique national settings and should be crafted accordingly (Solomon & Ginifer 2008: 18).

Gender differences are well built into the social and cultural structures that exist in local environments. These gender relations within communities vary widely and tend to be overlooked. In some post-war communities, returning female soldiers may be welcomed back with open arms. In others, traditional gender norms mean that female soldiers were clearly disadvantaged. In Sierra Leone for example, it was easier for a boy who amputated the hands of villagers to be accepted back into the village than it was for a girl who had suffered rape (Brett & Specht 2004). When implementing a DDR programme, understanding culture and context is critical, as the socially constructed gender relations that already exist will shape the programme itself.

Moreover, a new DDR approach has to ultimately recognize and encourage the cultural values and standards of target societies in order for the appropriate DDR incentives to be deployed (Solomon & Ginifer 2008: 2). DDR should not attempt to rewrite the traditional and cultural standards that have been embedded in communities for centuries. It is naïve and unrealistic to believe that anything remotely like this can be accomplished by any form of external intervention, let alone one as limited as a DDR operation.

DDR programmes must be tailored to the local political context and adequately reflect the realities of economic and cultural life on the ground (Ball 2006: 1). In order to respond to the real needs of female soldiers, DDR programmes must be designed through a process of continued dialogue with the ex-combatants and their communities in order to understand the complexity of the gender relations, rather than from

assumptions and western ideologies that are impossible to simply impose (Kingma 2004: 156).

5.2. Rethinking the Reintegration Phase

Since the introduction of DDR, the programme has used the reintegration phase to cover any and all activities that take place after demobilization. Given the security focus of DDR and the lack of obvious success of many reintegration programmes, many analysts are now arguing for revision of the reintegration phase, emphasizing the need for a much greater stress on long-term development assistance (Bouta, 2005; Ball, 2006; Muggah 2009; Pugel 2009). But development assistance requires a secure environment in order to be successful. According to Pugel (2009), it is time to consider an alternative strategic model for future DDR interventions; one that draws on the strengths of past initiatives while also acknowledging the intrinsic limitations of its reintegration programming interventions as engines of development. In adopting a more narrow and realistic approach, the quality and quantity of security provision could be improved (Muggah 2009: 17). This could mean that the reintegration part of DDR could be reduced in ambition.

By substituting “reintegration” with “reinsertion”, the programme can shift away from long-term and open-ended commitments and refocus on short-term and fixed objectives. Reintegration could then become superseded by mainstream development programmes entirely (Barron 2007; Pugel 2009). After conducting a personal evaluation in Sierra Leone, Arthy (2003) came to the conclusion that disarmament and demobilization efforts should be conducted completely separate from reintegration and by entirely separate organizations. Bouta, Frerks and Bannon (2005: 19) argue that the priority of the disarmament and demobilization phases should be security promotion. Without minimum conditions of security, no long-term social change – in gender relations – or anything else is possible.

Taking a very different tack, Maulden (2011) argues that the DDR programmes should not focus primarily on the needs of women of war, but rather on their strengths. During war many women take on new social/military roles and responsibilities and

UNSCR 1325 encourages female soldiers to become agents of change, placing a lot of emphasis on empowering women in the post-conflict era through peace promotion, decision-making and self-reliance.

Bouta et al. (2005) believe that local development agencies working with women during the post-conflict era are better able to deal with the different problems, needs and opportunities facing female ex-soldiers than internationally led DDR programmes. In addition, these agencies can focus on gender-equality issues, female empowerment and the inclusion of women in the national peace process. For example, in Sierra Leone, women groups have proven critical to the reintegration of former combatants. In 2004, Women Waging Peace conducted a study in Sierra Leone in order to see if local community efforts could provide the support for female soldiers more appropriately and effectively than the international community. Close to 60 percent of the women who were interviewed revealed the impact of the other community women in helping in the reintegration process.²⁰ Mazurana and Carlson (2004) attribute this to the extensive knowledge of the local culture and gender relations that local communities possess and the fact that they are not, unlike international actors, looking for an exit strategy.

Since DDR practitioners are not well-trained, resourced or equipped to deal with the complexity of gender relations in different cultures, adding the social change imperatives to DDR programmes could be sub-optimal or even potentially destructive.

²⁰ This is much higher compared to the assistance female soldiers claimed receiving from traditional leaders (20 percent) or international aid workers (32 percent) (Bouta 2005: 21). The women interviewed claimed that community women provided guidance, shared resources, and helped them obtain skills-training and education. Moreover, women's organizations also represented models for many of the female ex-combatants; over 65 percent of the respondents indicated that they would like to join such organizations, which they saw as practical assistance (Mazurana & Carlson 2004).

6. Conclusion

Many challenges arise in post-conflict environments and there are no easy answers for DDR, a standard element in peacebuilding programmes. Notwithstanding this, it is extraordinary that the UN and other agencies have done so little to analyze the impact of DDR initiatives – particularly the reintegration phase. This paper has drawn attention to the weak evidence base for analyzing security promotion policies in countries torn apart by war. Addressing this challenge requires greater attention being paid to systematic data collection and evaluation. Only then will “evidence-based policy” become a real possibility.

Now that it is well recognized that women participate in many different capacities and in large numbers in conflicts throughout the world, further research of their often unique DDR experiences is needed. This requires taking systematic monitoring and evaluation of the system, particularly the reintegration phase, far more seriously, while also acknowledging what can realistically be achieved through this type of social intervention.

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