



Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist

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Introduction

Women play essential roles in DDR processes, yet they are almost never included in the planning or implementation of these processes. However, since 2000, the United Nations and all other agencies involved in DDR and other post-conflict reconstruction activities have been in a better position to change this state of affairs by using Security Council Resolution 1325, which sets out a lucid and practical agenda for measuring the advancement of women in peacebuilding. Resolution 1325 begins with the recognition that women's visibility, both in national and regional instruments and in bi- and multilateral organizations, is crucial. It goes on to call for gender awareness in all aspects of peacekeeping initiatives, especially demobilization and reintegration, urges women's informed and active participation in disarmament exercises, and insists on the right of women to carry out their post-conflict reconstruction activities in an environment free from threat, especially of sexualized violence.

Peacebuilding, especially in the form of practical disarmament, needs to continue for a long time after formal demobilization and reintegration processes come to an end. This checklist is therefore intended to assist planners in designing and implementing both gender-sensitive short-term goals, and to assist in envisioning future-oriented long-term peace support measures. The checklist focuses on practical ways in which women—including women combatants, the wives of male soldiers, war widows, and other civilian women—can be included in the processes of disarmament and demobilization, and be recognized and supported in the roles they play in reintegration.

The needs of child soldiers are not always comparable to those of women and men, so they are not a particular focus of this checklist except inasmuch as consideration is given to the challenges that arise because the care of children, including child soldiers, is likely to fall primarily to women. A special note is also made about girl soldiers. The Cape Town Principles' definition of a child soldier is "any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced into marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms." However, in some parts of the world, a girl who bears a child, no matter how young she is, immediately gains the status of a woman. Care must therefore be taken to understand local interpretations of who is a girl and who a woman soldier.

Even when they are not involved with fighting forces themselves, women are significantly impacted by decisions made in the demobilization of men. The checklist therefore includes some ideas about how to design demobilization packages for men in such a way that the women in their families and broader communities will also benefit.

The processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration take place under such a wide variety of conditions that it would be impossible to address each of the circumstance-specific challenges which might arise. This list raises issues which frequently disappear in the planning stages of DDR, and aims to provoke further thinking and debate on the best ways to address different women's varied needs.

1 DDR and the Promotion of Women’s Rights in the Post-Conflict Period

It is widely agreed that if women representatives, chosen by women, do not participate in peace negotiations, processes designed to move countries from war to peace will not pay adequate attention to their needs—with severe long-term consequences. Nonetheless, women frequently lose political ground after conflict ends because, despite their active engagement in all aspects of social life in times of conflict, when post-war reconstruction processes begin, they often fail to enter into positions of political leadership. The problem is compounded because women’s exclusion is not only normalized in national structures, but also in international policy and structures. Women have been excluded from the planning of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes to date, a fault which must be squarely laid at the feet of gender-blind governments and gender-blind donor agencies.

1.1 Promoting Women’s Political Participation

- Is there a commitment to establish a quota of women at peace negotiations, particularly if there are non-party or NGO attendees invited?
- Are mechanisms in place to significantly involve and represent women in DDR planning when it takes place as part of peace negotiations?
- Are women fighters adequately represented? Do existing veterans’ associations recognise women’s needs?
- Are mechanisms in place to ensure the recognition and political participation of female ex-combatants and supporters after elections?
- Are women equipped to participate in democratic civil and political structures and supported in their political activities?
- Women leaders often become targets in the aftermath of war. Is this danger recognised, and are measures in place to protect women in public positions?
- Has the collaboration of women leaders (local and national) in assisting ex-combatants and widows’ return to civilian life been enlisted?

2a Including Ex-combatant Women in Demobilization and Reintegration

In planning DDR processes, program designers and implementers must address the needs of women ex-combatants as well as women who played other support roles, for instance as porters, cook, or “wives” (which should include those widowed) of combatants. Women and girls associated with fighting forces are not always officially married to male fighters, and might therefore be difficult to identify and in other ways especially vulnerable.

Program planners should take into account that women may have very different needs, and want to make different choices, in the post-conflict period. While some may wish to return to their original homes, others may choose to follow male partners to a new geographical location. Some women may be abandoned by departing soldiers. Some may choose to remain behind in a new place when their male partners return to their places of origin. Whatever the case, trying to adapt to a new culture where you are

perceived as an “outsider” brings with it particular challenges such as, for instance, learning a new language and cultural skills. Organizations which undertake DDR should keep this in mind and aim to facilitate the transition of such “displaced” women into their new community.

Experience shows that women associated with combat groups, especially irregular forces, are reluctant to identify themselves as DDR processes begin and thus miss the opportunity to benefit from them. Agencies specializing in assisting refugees and internally displaced persons have learned that women are far more likely to speak to women support workers, especially when intimate healthcare issues must be discussed. The same lesson should be applied to women associated with fighting forces: if they do not feel safe or welcomed in a DDR process, they are likely to ‘self-demobilize’—in other words, to disappear from view without taking advantage of any of the opportunities of demobilization. This excludes them both from immediate benefits such as medical care and re-training, and longer term gains such as re-employment in alternative security forces, greater political participation and access to economic alternatives. Their capacity for self-reintegration is likely to be very limited, resulting in homelessness, isolation, and exclusion from safe paid work. To avoid this situation, training must be put in place for women field workers whose role will be to interview women combatants and other participants in order to identify who should be included in DDR processes.

The reintegration period must also be sensitively handled for women to benefit. From the perspective of those who return, a specific challenge for planners may be to address the fact that life in the armed forces was relatively egalitarian. Reintegrating into a society with rigidly gendered social structures will put enormous stress on women who have been accustomed to freer modes of behavior and fairer divisions of labor. The attitudes of these women after the conflict ends may lead to social stigmatization from communities who resent, do not understand, or do not wish to change to accommodate this freedom.

Women are also likely to suffer particular stigmatization as war widows, or as “fallen” women who are bearers of “fatherless” or “ethnically different” children, for whom they may be expected to take sole responsibility. Such community isolation is especially dangerous in places where child soldiering is common, and may end up perpetuating cycles of violence because children who live on the margins of society are vulnerable to recruitment and abduction into armed forces.

When planning a DDR process, the following issues must be considered:

2.1 Identification of Female Combatants and Supporters

- Do women have the same access to information as men, so that they can take measures to obtain ex-combatant status?
- Do the agencies responsible for demobilization have women field workers to whom women combatants can safely report?
- Are strategies in place to identify and support abducted girls and women who have escaped or been released prior to demobilization?
- Do women have the option of registering separately from their partner?

- Are measures in place to support women with children, including measures to help reunify mothers and children in a place where both will be safe from re-recruitment?

2.2 *Demobilization of Troops*

- In the pre-discharge period, have gender-aware questionnaires been developed and gender-disaggregated data collected by means of which to identify the socio-economic profile of groups to be demobilized?
- If there is a choice about demobilization, do women have the same right to choose to be demobilized as men?
- In some countries, demobilized soldiers are offered opportunities in new security structures. Who is to be demobilized and who is to be retained as part of the restructured force in the post-conflict zone? Is an active effort being made to recruit and train women ex-combatants for positions in police and other security forces?
- Has a selection criteria for the attribution of veteran status or the entitlement of benefits been developed which does not result in *de facto* gender discrimination?
- Are safeguard mechanism in place, with, for example, the establishment of a committee with the power to point out discrimination and take appropriate measures to avoid it? There needs to be fair and efficient representation on this committee of female veterans who are dedicated to promoting women's needs.
- Do phasing-out programs include women soldiers?

2.3 *The Encampment Phase*

- Are cantonment sites women-friendly: i.e., are women's training needs, their need for childcare, their safety, their need for specific sanitary facilities and specialized healthcare, including nutritional needs for nursing or pregnant women, recognized at the outset?
- Does the option exist to give family members of combatants separate ID cards?
- Is domestic labor fairly divided between male and female combatants so that women can take equal advantage of briefings, re-training and other facilities at the site?
- Will civilian society accept and accredit training programs offered in the camps?
- Are support workers trained to recognize and address women's needs, including their political needs?
- Is the opportunity taken to inform women of benefits available to them and how to obtain them, and are women trained about their rights, eg, the right to own land?
- Is the threat of sexualized violence within the camp recognized and dealt with?
- Are men and women offered equal (but if necessary, separate) access to education about HIV/AIDS?
- Are interviews designed to collect socio-economic data specific to women's experiences? (This data could be significant for planning purposes and also for later planning and monitoring).
- Are the political needs of encamped women adequately represented at government level?

- If male soldiers are in the majority and demobilization is slower than expected, what contingency plans are in place to attend to the needs of women who move to the cantonment area, either to join partners or as domestic/sex workers? What measures are in place to prevent the re-recruitment of women and children?
- Are women's particular security needs recognized when planning their transport home?

2.4 *Funding*

- Is there sustainable funding to ensure the long-term success of the demobilization and demilitarization processes? Attention should be given to innovative practices like revolving credit and other such schemes.
- Are special funds allocated to women, and if not, what measures are in place to ensure that their needs will receive proper attention?

2b Including Civilian Women in Demobilization and Reintegration

Although the primary intent of demobilization is to remove combatants from their fighting roles as quickly as possible, even in the planning stages, it is imperative to think about how returning ex-soldiers will be received by the civilian community. From the perspective of the receiving community, it can seem that DDR "rewards" people who supported or committed atrocities. Communities often express resentment that they are expected to re-embrace those who have wronged them, and they often feel excluded from the plans that are developed to reintegrate ex-combatants and their supporters. The period of rehabilitation and reintegration will be a long one, and if it not well planned, it is highly likely that ex-combatants will not reintegrate and that divisions between them and the receiving community will widen as time goes on. Recognizing this danger from the outset is an imperative part of ensuring long-term stability and peacebuilding. Without a consideration of how communities of soldiers interact with communities of civilians, DDR as a peacekeeping measure is likely to fail in the long run. It is especially important to pay attention to supporting women in receiving communities.

- In planning a DDR process, has broad consultation been undertaken with a wide variety of social players, including women's groups?
- Is the community offered awareness-raising sessions to help them understand what DDR is, and what they can and cannot expect to gain from it?
- Given the gender divisions in caregiving work in most communities, civilian women are likely to play a significant role in taking care of returning fighters, including those who are ill or disabled. Are women offered training and support to assist them in this work?
- It is unfair to burden women with the reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers simply because they are usually the primary caregivers of children. Have resources been allocated to train women to understand and cope with traumatized children?
- Are women informed on how to help abducted girls gain demobilization and reintegration support?

3 Gender-Sensitive Implementation of Demobilization and Reintegration Support

3.1 Resettlement

- Are women properly included in any travel assistance that is offered after encampment? If a journey will take several days, the needs of women and their children must be catered for.
- Are women asked to choose where they will live? I.e., can they elect to return to land from which they or their partner came, or to move to semi-urban or urban areas where they may have more freedom from traditional gender roles?
- Is a transitional safety net in place that can help resettled women with housing, healthcare and counselling, and offer educational support to get their children (especially girls) to school?
- Are women informed about and able to access the local demobilization support office?

3.2 Financial Payment

- Is care taken to discuss and pay the financial portion of their demobilization package (if any) with women in private, away from male family members? This empowers them economically and may help protect them from exploitation by male intimates.
- If money is disbursed as part of the demobilization program, are the different funding needs / spending patterns of women recognized and accommodated (i.e., if it is safe to do this, do women prefer large payments of cash or monthly disbursement?)
- Do women have geographic access to banks as well as the right to open and manage a private bank account? If not, what measures can be put in place to safeguard their money?
- Are women trained as “barefoot bankers”?
- Are women’s traditional forms of money management recognized and supported (e.g., rotational loan and credit schemes)?
- Are single or widowed women able to access social security and pension schemes?
- Are women equipped to manage money in day-to-day life, i.e., paying for services, etc?

3.3 Education and Retraining Schemes

Experience shows that training women in economically profitable skills must be undertaken as soon as they are encamped. Once the process of reinsertion begins, women will be overwhelmed with the burdens of housework, agricultural labour, fetching water, child and elder care, and have inadequate access to transportation. They are therefore unlikely to be able to attend classes or sustain any other re-training exercises.

- What are the training needs of women ex-combatants, and who defines these?
- Are women informed of different job options and market opportunities and aware of the potential drawbacks of entering previously “male” workplaces?

- Do the kinds of training packages offered to women reflect local gender norms and standards about gender-appropriate labor, or attempt to broaden them? Does this benefit or hinder women's economic independence?
- Do training programs teach women to manufacture and repair labor-saving devices that might free up time used on domestic labor and permit them to engage in activities that earn money?
- Is childcare and other family support (e.g., elder care) available for women attending re-training programs?
- Are educational opportunities equally available to female and male children of ex-combatants or widows?

3.4 *Medical, Health and Psychological Needs*

- Are mechanisms in place to certify or otherwise recognize the expertise of female "barefoot doctors"?
- Are women actively recruited into medical services and encouraged to focus on women's health needs?
- What are women's specific health and psychological needs in the context of demobilization? Are they recognized as different from those of men?
- Women have a right to determine their own fertility and sexual availability: is this recognized and promoted?
- Are separate counseling and health facilities available to women and men?
- Are women's specific reproductive health care needs met?
- Is there awareness of sexualized violence against women combatants, both during the conflict and after, and are there facilities for treatment, counseling and protection?
- Is the problem of HIV/AIDS addressed, from the perspectives both of education for prevention and of care practices for those who are infected?
- Are mechanisms in place for community mental health practices (such as cleansing ceremonies) to contribute to the long-term psychological rehabilitation of ex-combatants; and how do these address women's specific suffering (often a result of sexualized violence)?

4 **Networking to Assist Reintegration**

Although priority is usually placed on training ex-fighters to become economically independent, combatants frequently experience enormous difficulty in reintegrating into social networks. Unless a holistic approach is taken, the challenges of negotiating a new social role may overwhelm all other efforts to reintegrate soldiers. Reintegration is not merely a stage between conflict and development; reconstructing a society after war requires a long-term process of role negotiation and psychological rehabilitation. Without suitable emphasis on this aspect of post-conflict transition, developmental goals are less likely to succeed.

- Has the support of local, regional and national women's organisations been enlisted to aid reintegration?
- If so, are existing women's organisations trained to understand the needs and experiences of ex-combatants? This may include negotiation or brokering to assist non-military women to understand the lives of the ex-combatants, as well as

providing long-term support and assistance to ex-combatants through helping them join non-military community structures.

- Are women ex-combatants made aware of these organisations and able to access them?
- Is the expertise of women ex-combatants—which may be non-traditional—recognised, respected and utilised by other women? How can this be facilitated?
- Is there space in women’s organisations for healing and reconciliation work in general, and can existing infrastructures be used, in particular, to assist the reconciliation and reintegration of ex-combatants from different factions?
- Can women ex-combatant’s reintegration be connected to broader strategies aimed at women’s post-conflict development in order to prevent resentment against fighters as a “privileged” group?
- Have women in the post-conflict zone already begun the process of reconstruction after war? Is this work recognized and supported?
- Can their expertise combine with the experiences and expectations of women fighters to guide the development of strategies for demobilization?
- Can women’s networks (local, national, regional and international) be approached for reintegration support?
- Is adequate use made of radio networks to educate local people about those who are being reintegrated, and thus alleviate potential tensions? Are women’s experiences adequately represented on radio?

5 Economic Concerns

Women’s participation in the economy is often overlooked. Women may be especially marginalized when they are not offered formal accreditation for skills gained during the period of armed struggle. This can have the effect of ghettoizing them into poorly paid and unprotected work. Their unrecognized skills are wasted and their creative efforts to maintain themselves and their families are overlooked. Both forms of exclusion represent an immeasurable loss in a post-conflict context.

When women’s labor in the home is uncounted and when their labor outside the home (such as food production) is seen as merely an extension of their domestic duties, perceptions of women as dependent on male wage earners are reinforced. On the other hand, women who do achieve a measure of economic success may experience increased violence from less successful male partners. They may also become the targets of community resentment. This is among the reasons why, while women’s access to economic independence should receive emphasis, reconstruction activities must aim for the rehabilitation of the whole society.

- Does a functioning economic infrastructure exist in the region? If so, how is economically active labor measured (i.e., is household and agricultural labor reflected in the GDP so that women’s contributions are properly measured)?
- Are women in informal economic activities considered (by themselves and others) as employed or productively active members of society?
- Are demobilized women trained in administration, planning and money management?

- Do plans to rebuild the economy pay proper attention to women's potential contributions and economic needs?
- Their homes are often the principal geographical base for women's work: are technical and labour support systems in place to assist demobilized women in building a house?
- If a social security system exists, are women ex-combatants informed about it and do they have independent access to it?
- If a labor office exists, can women ex-fighters access it easily? Does it target their particular needs and promote their skills?
- Do women ex-combatants have access to legal aid or support to assist them in combating discrimination (in both private and public spheres)?
- Can self-employment be turned to women ex-combatant's benefit through innovative economic support systems (such as rotational credit schemes and "barefoot bankers") and the development and formalization of trade and investment networks owned and operated by women?
- Are women ex-fighters more severely affected by a generally poor labor market / high unemployment than men? To facilitate women's employment, are feasibility studies / assessments of economic growth direction undertaken before re-training is begun?
- Can the economy support the kind of training women might ask for during the demobilization period? For instance, they may wish to be trained as nurses and teachers. Before training begins, it is necessary to determine whether a healthcare or education infrastructure still exist to support workers in this sector.
- Have obstacles, such as employers refusing to hire women ex-combatants, or narrow expectations of what work women are permitted to do, been taken into account before re-training is offered?

6 Nutrition, Accommodation, Land Use and Economic Activities (for ex-combatants resettled in rural areas)

One of the greatest needs of ex-combatants and their families is access to land and housing. In securing these, the specific needs of women have to be taken into account, particularly when traditional practices are not willing to accommodate women-headed households.

- Studies show that negotiation space is often opened after conflict ends. Can this opportunity be used to get new land and property rights for women?
- Are single or widowed women ex-combatants recognized as heads of household and permitted access to existing housing and land?
- How is this access determined, and by whom?
- How secure is their tenure, and what measures can be taken to protect women ex-combatants or war widows from being forced into casual labor on land which is not their own?
- Are legal measures in place to protect their access to *quality* land and water?
- Are there water sources close to the land?
- Are women sufficiently trained in agricultural methods? Are they permitted all usufructuary rights, including the right to farm cash crops?

- Can they choose how to dispose of crops grown on their land (i.e., for family needs or for marketing), and exercise control over cash money earned from agriculture?
- Is it safe for women to take their produce to the marketplace? Is it safe for them to trade there? What measures can be put into place to protect women from banditry, especially in places with prolific small arms?
- Is women's agricultural activity measured and acknowledged as part of the economic activity of the country? What benefits might accrue from this?
- Are women permitted to own and use farm animals? If not, how does this affect their nutrition and also their ability to work the land?
- Do women have equal access to communally-owned farm implements and water pumping equipment, and can women own such equipment?
- Can traditional taboos on access and usage be negotiated?
- Do training programs during the encampment phase include adequate information on nutrition, and do they recognize and work around traditional farming patterns, nutritional taboos, etc?
- Do re-training programs offer women ex-combatants and war widows adequate access to information on growing and selling cash crops?

7 Accommodation and Economic Activities (for ex-combatants resettled in urban and peri-urban areas)

- Can single or widowed women sign rental agreements (housing, telephone, etc)?
- Is there adequate childcare / elder care for women pursuing economic activities outside the home?
- Do businesses and industries accept and employ women ex-combatants, especially those trained in non-traditional income generating activities? Are potential employees targeted for sensitization training to encourage them to employ female ex-combatants?
- What measures have been taken to prevent the ghettoization of women ex-fighters and war widows on the fringes of the economy? This includes excessive reliance on NGO activity, which might become a substitute for long-term participation in the labor market.
- What measures can be taken to avoid stigmatization of economically active women, especially those who have also served in combat?
- What measures are taken to address women's security in urban areas?

8 Including Women in Disarmament Processes

Because of the breadth and severity of their impact, and the danger they pose when peace is fragile, a reduction in the number of small arms and light weapons (SALW) that circulate before, during and after a conflict is a vital accompaniment to DDR efforts. Men have traditionally been associated with the use, ownership and promotion of small arms, and are injured and killed by guns in far larger numbers than are women. However, the security implications for women are also enormous. When guns flow freely into communities and are not removed after armed conflict ends, women run the risk not only of facing lethal domestic violence, but become more vulnerable while managing their daily workload. Women are also burdened with caring for those who have been injured or disabled by gunfire.

The planners of disarmament processes have been contradictory in their approaches to women: women are usually excluded from decision-making because they are considered to have no interest in or understanding of SALW, even though they are simultaneously seen as an asset because they have been at the forefront of opposing SALW proliferation. This contradiction has meant incoherency in the planning of disarmament projects to date.

- In planning a disarmament exercise, how can women be educated, empowered and included in opportunities to support the process?
- Does the inclusion of women stem from a commitment to their equal interest in seeing the number of weapons reduced, rather than from stereotypical images that women oppose guns because they are nurturers, innocents, and victims in situations of armed conflict?
- Are women's existing efforts to raise awareness of proliferation and misuse identified and recognised when planning new disarmament processes?
- Are women carefully and specifically targeted and trained for inclusion in microdisarmament processes such as Weapons for Development (WfD) projects?
- Is women's knowledge of trading routes, weapons caches, and other sources of hidden SALW recognized and drawn from in disarmament planning? Are women interviewed along with men when conducting household and other surveys to determine attitudes to SALW?
- Are women offered opportunities to use their knowledge and training in SALW to influence male family and community members to disarm?
- After training, are efforts made to tie women's new expertise in disarmament to the promotion of their broader political participation?

9 Gender-awareness in the Demobilization and Reintegration of Men

Since DDR is aimed at transformation, not including women and reflecting on women's perspectives permits men to stay focused on a worldview in which it is possible to maintain violent and destructive patterns of behaviour. These issues should be kept in mind when dealing with the demobilization and reintegration of male ex-fighters:

- It is especially important that men see women in positions of authority in DDR processes. If women leaders (including field officers) are absent, men are unlikely to take seriously education efforts aimed at changing their attitudes and ideas about militarised, masculine power.
- In the encampment phase, men should be offered education and counseling on the prevention of sexualized violence, and especially, on the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- While DDR planners have assumed that financial packages given to male ex-combatants will be used for the benefit of family members, cumulative wisdom from the field asserts that demobilized men are likelier to go on spending sprees in the discharge phase than to share their money equably. Sustainable reintegration cannot happen unless male ex-combatants are recognized as members of a larger community, which often means being part of a family unit, rather than as individuals. For the maximum communal benefit to ensue, planners must ensure that women have fair access to the reinsertion package granted to ex-combatants.

- The spouse or other female family members of an ex-combatant should be brought in to witness the signing of an agreement on how his money will get paid. By this means the resources may actually get passed on to the family, and from there move into the broader community.

10 Notes and Resources

1. An earlier version of this checklist, which did not include a section on disarmament, was first published as an appendix to a paper entitled “Gendering Demilitarization as a Peacebuilding Tool,” Paper 20, Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002 (<http://www.bicc.de/general/paper20/content.html>).

2. This checklist also benefits from Nathalie de Watteville’s 2002 study, “Addressing Gender Issues in Demobilization and Reintegration Programs” (available at [http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/Networks/ESSD/icdb.nsf/D4856F112E805DF4852566C9007C27A6/9D592F129527B3ED85256C0F00787064/\\$FILE/Gender.pdf](http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/Networks/ESSD/icdb.nsf/D4856F112E805DF4852566C9007C27A6/9D592F129527B3ED85256C0F00787064/$FILE/Gender.pdf)).

3. Resolution 1325 is available at www.peacewomen.org/un/UN1325/1325index.html.

4. For more information about child soldiers, see http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html.

5. More resources on DDR can be found at <http://www.undp.org/erd/ddr/index.htm> and http://www.usaid.gov/regions/afr/conflictweb/demob_bib.html.