

FAST FACTS

United Nations Development Programme



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Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration: fostering sustainable livelihoods for ex-combatants

When conflict comes to an end, those who directly took part in fighting may have special livelihoods, economic and psycho-social needs resulting from sometimes years of being engaged in armed violence. Consideration must be given to these needs when communities and nations try to rebuild.

Failing to address the special requirements of ex-combatants may have long-term consequences for sustainable development, compound the conditions for instability and threaten what can sometimes be a fragile peace. Former soldiers may not have the skills or means to earn an income as civilians; the trauma of what they have witnessed may leave them vulnerable to psychological disorders; and disaffected ex-combatants who are left without support networks, other than their former comrades, may seek redress through crime or political violence, especially when the underlying causes of the conflict, such as unemployment, inequity or poverty still exist.

UNDP's approach

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is a process with political, military, security, humanitarian, and socio-economic dimensions.

Disarmament entails the physical removal of weapons and ammunition from ex-belligerents; **demobilization** is the formal discharge of ex-combatants from military or paramilitary groups; while **reintegration** describes the long-term process of assimilating former combatants back into society after a conflict.

UNDP focuses most of its attention on the reintegration aspect of this process¹, enabling better economic and livelihoods opportunities for former fighters; strengthening governance; and helping communities to manage conflict, so as to guarantee the sustainable assimilation of ex-combatants into society. This approach contributes to short-term stabilization and long-term post-crisis socio-economic recovery and development.

¹ In non-UN Missions, UNDP helps governments to disarm and demobilize combatants. In UN Mission settings however, this is the responsibility of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Political Affairs.

Although support varies by country, UNDP offers former fighters small business assistance and job opportunities, with a strong emphasis on both the community and the needs of the ex-combatants.

UNDP's "community security" approach ensures that communities are free from fear; prioritizing security and economic measures that communities themselves ask for; and making sure that links with other communities are improved. This reintegration process is led by UNDP trained and supported National Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commissions and other local authorities.

When former combatants, some of whom are traumatised and used to a life of violence, are reintegrated into a community, it can increase the risk of gender-based violence. Reintegration measures often emphasise community empowerment and gender-responsive initiatives.



Female ex-combatant in South Sudan is trained through UNDP's disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. Photo by UNDP South Sudan/Brian Sokol

UNDP in action

In 2012, UNDP increased the number of emergency jobs, employment and livelihoods opportunities that it provided globally. Viable job opportunities were offered to nearly 14,000 ex-combatants and their associates in **Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Indonesia, Somalia, Nepal, Sudan, and South Sudan.**

In **Afghanistan**, UNDP is helping more than 2,500 former Taliban and anti-government fighters restart normal lives with employment opportunities in public works and infrastructure projects. Ex-combatants have been digging wells; building or rebuilding damaged bridges; and constructing roads, protection walls, canals, and schools. These initiatives not only provide a means for sustainable livelihoods, but contribute to visible improvements in security throughout Afghanistan.

In **Burundi**, UNDP has supported the reintegration of former members of armed groups, including the National Forces of Liberation (FNL) back into their communities. In 2012, UNDP helped create temporary work for over 4,300 conflict affected people (of which 48 per cent were women), with each beneficiary receiving an average of nearly 80 days of work in the year. The work has contributed to improved environmental resilience, through for example, the removal of sedimentation from Lake Tanganyika, reforestation, and the rehabilitation of irrigation channels. Projects not only provided temporary employment opportunities to both ex-combatants and host community members, but also offered workers the option of putting a portion of their salary into a savings fund. The fund also receives contributions from UNDP, and provides start-up loans to community members so they can open their own small businesses. Ninety-three percent of those that participated in the work projects invested the savings they made into joint businesses with other community members.

In **Nepal**, in 2012, UNDP's efforts saw 2,000 former Maoist fighters receive reintegration support, which includes vocational training, and further education opportunities, as well as grants and loans to start up small businesses.

In **Somalia**, by the end of 2012, around 500 female and 500 male young former fighters, as well as over 800 at-risk young-men had signed up to a UNDP, UNICEF and International Labour Organization scheme to steer them away from crime, piracy and armed violence. The programme is providing young people with work in garbage collection and environmental health; rehabilitating social infrastructure, such as irrigation canals, access roads, market places, and public buildings; and training in a broad range of topics, including leadership, social skills, the rule of law, peace building, Quran studies, drama, and sports.

In **Sudan**, UNDP provides management, technical and capacity building advice to the government to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex combatants and develop mine action programmes. By 2012, close to 5,200 former fighters of the Sudanese Armed Forces and other armed groups had received training in civic education, literacy, food processing and reproductive health, as well as start-up kits that included small loans and the tools necessary to establish small businesses. About a quarter of these fighters were women.



With the help of the joint Government-UNDP disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme Alzain started his successful shop in Damazin, Sudan. DDR is a nation-wide effort that aims to improve the economic, social and political welfare of former combatants and community members. Photo by UNDP Sudan/Omer Abdelrahem

The training has helped those who have taken part in the scheme to be more actively involved in agricultural cooperatives, decision making bodies, peace committees and community based organizations, which has helped to reinforce the social, economic, psychological and political reintegration process.

In **South Sudan**, in the latter half of 2012, UNDP helped over 1,800 fighters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, including about 600 women, and over 100 disabled veterans, to set up farms and businesses through a small grants scheme. The South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission, which is supported by UNDP, has overseen the demobilization of more than 10,000 former combatants to date. Nearly 8,000 have entered reintegration training programmes, with about 400 having already graduated.

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