HOW DO WE MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR) PROGRAMMES?

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Abstract

Over the past 20 years, DDR programmes have been introduced in more than 30 countries and are frequently mandated by UN Security Council Resolution’s (Clark, 2014:1). Each programme is driven by a wide range of actors and donors with diverse assumptions, expectations and mandates (Herbert et al, 2013:16) and is often plagued by diverse challenges including ‘cultural insensitivity, excessive force, poor coordination, half-baked approaches and discriminatory and localized perspectives’ (Wepundi, 2011:59). While many evaluative studies have been carried out, existing literature on the subject suggests that the track record of DDR programmes is difficult to assess (Humphrey & Weinstein, 2005:3). As a result the extent to which DDR has been an effective tool to achieve peace, security and development in post conflict societies remains unclear and there is no uniform idea of how success or failure should be defined. Traditionally, the success of DDR is measured crudely by how many ex-combatants have participated and how many guns collected. This paper argues that since DDR programmes do not exist in isolation, but are often introduced as part of broader peace-building efforts in post conflict societies, success could better be measured, qualitatively as well, in military (security), political, and economic terms by assessing on a case-by-case basis, the extent to which each specific programme contributes to providing security, not only for the ‘state’ but for individuals and their communities as well, building legitimate political institutions, and reviving the economy thus creating an enabling environment for peace, security, stability and long term development.

Key Words: DDR, Post-Conflict Societies, Security, Peace building, Development

Introduction

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is a process that is designed to contribute to, and support, wider national and international post-conflict peace-building efforts aimed at restoring stability, security, development and peace in post-conflict societies (UN, 2014:2). This process technically involves disarmament which is the collection, documentation and control/disposal of weapons from ex-combatants and, sometimes, the civilian population; demobilization which focuses on the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces/groups; and reintegration which is focused on helping ex-combatants return to their communities, acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (UN, 2014:4). Being able to measure success is significant as it can help identify areas of the programme that need improvement while at the same time determining whether or not the programme is achieving its goals. DDR is a compound process with political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions (UNDP, 2005:11). This paper agrees that there is no comprehensive pattern
of DDR practice that can be ‘superimposed on post-conflict scenarios around the world’ (UN/OSAA, 2007:4) given the different dynamics of post-conflict societies. Difficulties abound in any evaluative effort but one of the ways to evaluate the success or failure of any programme is by looking at its aims and objectives in the first instance. The main objectives of DDR according to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) are:

1. To contribute to security and stability by facilitating reintegration and providing the enabling environment for rehabilitation and recovery
2. To restore trust through confidence-building among factions and the community
3. To prevent or limit future violent conflict
4. To contribute to national reconciliation, and
5. To free up human and financial resources for reconstruction and development (UNDP, 2005:11)

It is clear from these stated objectives that while the focus is primarily on ex-combatants, the main beneficiaries are the wider community (UNDP, 2005:11) and it is for this reason that measuring success must include the wider community as they also suffer the consequences of these programmes when they go wrong. From this perspective one can evaluate measurable indicators of success. This paper looks at three areas, military/security, political and economic success.

**Measuring Military (Security) Success:**

Post-conflict peace building takes place in the context of deepening humanitarian and economic crisis in post conflict societies, exasperated by violence and widespread human rights violations (Herbert et al, 2013:1). DDR is often introduced in this context and is aimed at creating an enabling environment for peace processes by dealing with security problems that arise when ex-combatants are trying to adjust to normalcy during the critical transition period from conflict to peace and development (Miliken & Krause, 2002). The task is to remove arms from circulation, from the ex-combatants and the civilian population after the end of conflict, disassemble military structures to avoid escalating rates of crime and violence in the communities (Faltas et al, 2001:1). A measurable indicator of DDR success, therefore, is security. Security is a highly contested concept (Cox, 1981) but here we refer to it as a dual concept involving both human and state security (Kerr, 2013:105). Defending territory and state through various means including military force is often seen as the object of security but the protection of individuals and communities from violence and insecurity is of primary importance, as well, for post-conflict peace building (Kerr, 2013:104). The objective here is, as Alkiri (2004:360) argues, to ‘protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that advance human freedoms and fulfillment’. Security-building after war is about a comprehensive reversal of war conditions to peace amongst belligerents in a way that brings about peaceful conditions and improvement of security through transforming the role and posture of armed combatants and making war and violence no longer attractive to them as a means to an end (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005:2). However, the urgency with which guns are removed from circulation may suggest some level of success but recent cases like Central African Republic (CAR) have shown that this could breed a security dilemma especially where the state is a party in the conflict (Herbert et al, 2013). On face value it may
seem that disarmament and demobilization directly increase security hence the narrow desire to depend on quantitative measures based on number of guns collected or number of soldiers demobilized. But as McEvoy & Murray (2008:11) rightly argue, there are ‘security risks attached to adhoc, short-term disarmament campaigns’. In their study on Eastern Equatoria and Turkana North District, they show that almost 80% of respondents said that small arms made them feel safer and more than 60% said disarmament would decrease security in their village (McEvoy & Murray, 2002:14). The provision of security needs to go beyond ensuring that all hostilities cease between the former conflict parties but also that no other forms of violence persist or emerge (Wolff, 2010:165) that cause insecurity in the community. Success in this area should be about how the people feel not just what those implementing the programmes think. This suggests a bottom-up type of evaluation that takes the feelings of the communities, community security and community centered violence reduction, into account and measures security from the perspective of the people. In addition, not all DDR programmes are introduced in ideal or genuine ceasefire situations and simply assuming that demobilization and disarmament processes directly lead to security is misleading and wrongly based on the assumption that all parties are willing to disarm (Herbert et al, 2013). It is important to note that once a society is heavily armed, control and elimination of personal weapons might make disarmed individuals especially vulnerable to those who may not disarm as Barash & Webel (2014:290) rightly point out. For instance, in Sierra Leone while 22,000 combatants disarmed between May and October 2001, other hardcore rebels refused to disarm and most of the weapons handed over were not in working condition (Oxfam International, 2007:1). Measuring success therefore only in quantitative terms by considering the number of guns collected and the number of soldiers demobilized is praiseworthy but allows for criticisms that DDR does not effectively assist in achieving peace in insecure environment as it does not give an accurate picture of the degree of security achieved. Cases differ and these quantitative measures alone tend to assume similarity in all cases, which is misleading (Khakee & Florquin, 2003). Kosovo was different from Albania where weapons had flooded the society after the collapse of state institutions in 1997. Albanians recognized, as a community, the threat these weapons posed to their communities and they were more willing to surrender their weapons, about 200,000 while in Kosovo only 155 weapons were collected (UNDP, 2003). While the breakdown of command, control and capacity in the warring factions is something that can be measured to indicate security success (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005:7) it is also important to measure how safe people feel. Unless the ultimate purpose of security is about the security of people and their communities, then the whole relevance of DDR is questionable.

Measuring Political Success:

Beyond security success, the next important area to consider is political success. As Wolff (2010:163) succinctly observes, an essential aim of post-conflict reconstruction is to create a set of political structures in accordance with an agreed conflict settlement that allows the conduct of a non-violent, just and democratic political process where incentives for peaceful political strategies outweigh any potential benefits to be gained from a relapse to violence. The idea of DDR leading to a politically stable domestic environment is developed out of the process of modern state formation, which revolves as Miliken & Krause (2002) rightly posit, from its central functions of providing security, welfare and, most importantly representation (Schwarz,
Peace agreements aim to establish democratic forms of governance and/or to improve existing political systems with a deliberate view towards greater stability, representation and inclusiveness (Wolff, 2010:163). The major task here is two-fold: first, how to encourage elites of conflict groups to give up violence as a means of pursuing political power and relying instead on exclusively democratic means (including, elections); and secondly, how to deal with the wider legacy of a conflict in terms of its effects on political culture, the structures of civil society (or lack thereof) and these tasks entail breaking up existing patterns of politics and forcing a reconstruction of social and political relationships into non-violent or non-coercive mode (Miliken & Krause, 2002). Often DDR programmes include a timetable for elections and a successful election is seen as an indicator of success. But as some scholars rightly argue, elections alone are not enough to guarantee political integration of armed groups (Wolff, 2010:166). Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Ireland suggests that political liberalization early in post conflict situations are unlikely to achieve an inclusive and stable political process due to unwillingness of elites to cooperate, lack of trust and fear of domination (Wolff, 2010:174). This is because, in the long run, sustainable success in DDR-led post-conflict peace-building depends primarily, as Paris (2004) rightly argues, on building stable and effective institutions before liberalizing political competition and economic activity. Therefore, beyond elections, an important indicator of success that should be measured is the presence of effective institutions and the full political engagement of all legitimate parties concerned. The difficulty here though is being able to discern between politically and criminally motivated conflict parties given that not all local actors involved in the process are politically legitimate representatives of their communities (Wolff, 2010:165). Furthermore, the process of creating democratic domestic order often involves a great deal of violent struggle against predatory elites, contemporary warlords, repressive leaders and authoritarian rulers (Miliken & Krause, 2002). At the same time these warlords and leaders could be central to restoring the desired order in post conflict societies. As Wolff (2010:167) explains, while this is a difficult and challenging situation, leaders of armed groups can make a transition from leading their community during conflict to leading them in peacetime. For instance, Gerry Adams gradually moved Sinn Fein from a political support base of IRA terrorism to a professional political party after he became president in 1983 moving the group from the margin of politics to center stage (McGarry et al, 2004:31). Although there are challenges, getting former combatants to accept non-violence and democratic politics as the only way to achieve their ultimate goals is significant for the overall success of a peace process. Another measurable indicator is how the programme manages political expectations of ex-combatants, especially spoilers, those leaders among them who feel their power is threatened by any peace emerging from negotiated settlements and can destroy negotiated agreements if they are not adequately engaged in a proper way as Stedman (1997:5) rightly explains. Care has to be taken not to put power back in the hands of those individuals and groups who were instrumental to the conflict in the first place. Creating local capacity is one way to limit the impact of spoilers whose activities try to destroy the fragile peace and wear out external commitment to reshape the terrain of power and insecurity (Wolff, 2010:162). In all, therefore, political success lies in the extent to which armed groups chains of command have been dismantled regardless of the number of arms collected, the political transformation of armed groups and the willingness of elites to cooperate within new democratic structures. These are all indicators that can and should be measured.
Measuring Economic Success:

The whole idea of DDR is anchored on the need to transform post conflict societies into peaceful ones. The task here is one of transforming a conflict-driven economy into a robust peace economy with sustainable levels of growth. This includes the reintegration of former combatants and refugees into the economic process. DDR efforts are aimed at supporting ex-combatants to become active participants in the peace process through removing weapons from the hands of combatants, taking the combatants out of military structures, and integrating combatants socially and economically into society (Dwyer, 2012:278). The economic success of DDR involves all three components but is closely tied to the component of reintegration. The concept of reintegration is highly contested and although it is one of the most measurable aspects of DDR it is also the most difficult aspect of DDR to measure (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005:7). As Colletta et al (1996:24) rightly observe, there is a negative label associated with reintegration that ex-combatants reject and that limits their participation; one that sees them as violent thugs and criminals with sexually transmitted diseases who need reintegration. Another problem is the degree of social cohesiveness, trust and the social capital of the receiving community (Colletta et al, 1996:24). Scholars like Torjesen (2013:2) rightly argue that reintegration is a ‘process not a programme’ and so when we measure the success of post-conflict reintegration by the number of programmes initiated and number of ex-combatants that participated, it tends to remove attention from larger social, political and economic processes that are linked to ex-combatants exiting from armed groups. Reintegration packages and training programmes have benefits as they help leaders deliver concrete benefits to combatants at the end of conflict and provide a mechanism to legitimize the warring factions (or exclude them) and engage the leadership of the armed groups in programme design and implementation (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005:7). However, the programming part of these programmes are just one part of the process (Colletta et al, 1996:24) and a more accurate measure of success would be the inclusivity of the programmes and how the ex-combatants themselves, including women and children, individually participate (if they do) and how they respond to and deal with the social, political and economic challenges they face (Torjesen, 2013:2). Another indicator of success is the extent to which communities hosting ex-combatants receive support rather than a narrow focus on ex-combatants alone. Critics of DDR programmes often argue that DDR benefits war criminals and this could be because the programmes are not community driven and the emphasis is on monetary incentives for ex-combatants. For instance, in Kindu, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a Victims Association complained that DDR activities reward those who have committed war crimes (Wolff, 2010:176). While financial incentives are a crucial part of these programmes, they can easily become an integral element of war and post-war economies in which soldiers, politicians and organized criminals benefit the most (Kaldor, 1999). Involving the community could reduce the problem of being seen to reward those who have committed war crimes (Oxfam International, 2007:3). In this sense therefore, the extent to which programmes are community –driven is a measurable indicator of economic success. Furthermore, the dismantling of the war economy (Kaldor, 1999) is a measurable indicator and one that is crucial for economic success. Many scholars argue that the experience of social and economic reintegration facilitated by DDR programmes has the ability to transform the cost-benefit calculus of previous participants in the war economy, thus transforming their economic activities and helping to breakdown the other
incentives that create and sustain war-time economies (Oryema, 2013:3). Conflicts create conditions in which large parts of the population become increasingly dependent on cooperation with transnational criminal networks for their own survival and this has important consequences for how they respond to efforts aimed at post-conflict peacebuilding. An example is Afghanistan, where a large part of the population has its source of income in the growing and processing of poppies for the production of heroin (Goodhand, 2004). While it is difficult to measure when and how a war economy has been reformed or transformed, the extent to which DDR offers local populations alternatives to sustain themselves and their families is a measurable indicator. This is extremely connected to weakening the influence of local warlords and crime lords and extending the control of the central government to some of the most remote regions of the country (Goodhand, 2004). If people feel that they were better off during the war, they may not see the need to support any form of change. Hence the extent to which DDR programmes transform and rebuild an economy in a way that makes it suitable for peacetime and less dependent on violence and crime is an important indication of success.

Conclusion

DDR programmes are an important element in a peace process that can be used to support a peace-building framework and they play a crucial role in peacekeeping and post conflict reconstruction (Muggah, 2005:276). DDR programmes are vital to post-conflict recovery, but it is only one part of effective post-conflict recovery that needs clear leadership and coordination of peace agreements (Oxfam International, 2007:4) because armed groups cannot be asked to disarm, demobilize and disengage their military forces when no legitimate institutions exist to enforce peace agreements (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005:6). Furthermore, for a society that has experienced the devastating effects of war, the failure to reintegrate thousands of ex-combatants may present a threat to continued stability (Humphrey & Weinstein, 2005:4). While the approach to DDR needs to be tailored to the specific needs of a country or region to make assessment plausible, it should not at the same time be seen as a solution to every problem (Pouligny, 2004:7) because initiatives that do not take into account the context of conflict are destined to have lower rates of success during disarmament and demobilization (Small Arms Survey, 2002:291). DDR can be successful in one aspect and not very successful in the other (Miliken& Krause, 2002). We should not expect DDR to accomplish too much given that it is only a small part of a peace-building process. Success should be measured in terms of the extent to which it has produced security, political and economic success stories from the perspective of individual ex-combatants, communities and visible transformation. On its own DDR cannot be said to prevent further conflict and restore stability since it works with other initiatives and reforms ((UNDP, 2005:11). There should be wider collaboration and cohesion among all the institutions involved in post conflict peace building activities to avoid negative overlaps in one area and a total neglect of other areas in order to achieve overall success. For instance closely linked to DDR programmes is the concept of Security Sector Reform (SSR) introduced by development donors (Brzoska, 2003). DDR is innately political and as such integrated SSR/DDR roles permit a holistic view of the ties between DDR, political/SSR issues such as military and police rightsizing and the parallel military integration (Bryden and Scherrer, 2012:32).Though with its own practical problems (Paris, 2004), SSR is also charged with the provision of security, transformation of armed forces
as well as the prosecution of illegally armed non-state players in order to re-establish a state monopoly on the use of justifiable force (N’Diaye, 2009). Correct security reforms on their part will potentially make the work of DDR easier to achieve. In all, these challenges can be tackled by linking DDR to wider recovery efforts focusing on employment opportunities, sustainable natural resource management and a focus on women and children (UN, 2014:16). Finally, while providing security, building legitimate political institutions, and reviving the economy are important success indicators, it will be misleading to ignore the deeper physical and emotional damages that are caused by conflicts which prevent reconciliation afterwards and contribute to continued tensions between former combatants and their communities despite negotiated deals and peace settlements. The need for a robust and holistic approach to building peace in post-conflict societies with greater cohesion among all institutions that have a part to play cannot be overemphasized.

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