

# **Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration**

Building Blocs for Dutch Policy

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## Abbreviations

BICC	Bonn International Centre for Conversion
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FLMN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GBV	Gender-based and sexual violence
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ILO	International Labour Office
IOM	International Office for Migration
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoFA	(Netherlands) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SSR	Security sector reform
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
UN	United Nations
(UN)DDA	United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
(UN)DPKO	United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission to Liberia
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

## I. Introduction

With the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 the topic of gender and armed conflict is firmly placed on the international agenda. Most attention so far has been paid to women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. Less consideration is given to women's roles in active warfare and to women who operate as combatants in (ir)regular armies in conflict. This is despite the fact that paragraph 13 of Resolution 1325 encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants.<sup>1</sup>

Only recently have multilateral organizations, and to a lesser extent bilateral donors, started to address the topic of gender and DDR in their policies. The Netherlands is becoming increasingly active in the field of DDR, and for this reason a policy on DDR and gender has been developed in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

Section 2 of this policy paper depicts how both women and men are actively involved in warfare via (ir)regular armies. In Section 3, it touches on gender-specific roles of women and men in armies. Section 4 examines changing gender relations in armies. Section 5 discusses the challenges for DDR programmes in targeting female ex-combatants. The last section outlines the main policy considerations and options for a Dutch policy on gender and DDR. The annexe provides a checklist for donors on the key gender considerations in the planning and implementation of DDR programmes.

## 2. Women's Active Involvement in Warfare

It is usually assumed that men are more violent than women and that women more inclined to and supportive of peace. At the same time, though, there is growing evidence and recognition that women as well as men are actively involved in fighting during conflict.<sup>3</sup> Female combatants have been active in forces in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Liberia and Algeria.<sup>4</sup> Over the last decade girls have been part of fighting forces in 55 countries and involved in armed conflict in 38 of these countries, all of them internal conflicts. In addition, girls in fighting forces participated in a number of international conflicts, including those in Lebanon, Macedonia, Uganda and Sudan.<sup>5</sup> Although the proportion of female participation in national armies, guerrilla or armed liberation movements varies, it generally ranges from 10 per cent to one-third of combatants. In Sri Lanka women comprised one-third of the fighting forces,<sup>6</sup> and one-quarter of the combatants of El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), while in Nicaragua some 30 per cent of soldiers and leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front were

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council, 2000, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> The ideas in this paper are also reflected in the recent World Bank Publication *Gender, Conflict and Development* (November 2004) by Tsjard Bouta, Georg Frerks and Ian Bannon. The author would like to thank Ms Irma Specht, Director of Transition International, for her comments and input to the paper.

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of 'women warriors', see, for instance, Goldstein, 2001, pp. 59-127.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Barth, 2002, Chapter 1, quoting Kriger, 1992; Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998; and Arthur, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004, pp. 22-24.

<sup>6</sup> Lindsey, 2000, p. 562.

women.<sup>7</sup> In general, there seems to be a tendency to recruit more women and children if the conflict drags on and the availability of male recruits becomes scarcer.

Although women and men participate in warfare through a variety of security bodies (military, police, intelligence, and so on), this paper concentrates on their involvement in the military. On the one hand, it deals with those military institutions that are authorized to use force, such as the armed forces and the paramilitary forces, which will be referred to hereafter as ‘regular armies’. On the other hand, it also takes into account the non-state military actors, such as liberation armies, guerrilla armies and traditional militias, which will be called ‘irregular armies’. Within these ‘regular’ and ‘irregular’ armies, male and female combatants do play different roles. It is acknowledged that female combatants not only fulfil combat roles, but also the roles of, for example, cook, porter, administrator, doctor, spy, partner and sex slave. Moreover, distinguishing combatants from civilians is very difficult. This distinction usually becomes blurred in most intrastate conflicts, because of the involvement of various parties, ‘regular armies’ and ‘irregular armies’, the lack of a defined battlefield, the use of hit-and-run and guerrilla tactics, changes in position from combatant to civilian and vice versa (part-time soldiering), and combatants who are not recognizable as such because they wear civilian clothes and use simple arms such as machetes and other agricultural tools.

Male and female civilians may also support warfare without joining any of the warring parties by, for example, broadcasting ‘hate talk’, and instilling in the next generation hatred against the enemy or opposing group. Enloe relates how ideals of Serbian femininity (the ‘patriotic mother’ or the occasional promotion of the women fighter) have been constructed in ways deliberately intended to bolster the militarization of masculinity.<sup>8</sup> Enloe also elaborates on how the militarization of women is necessary for the militarization of men. She asserts that militarization does not always come in the guise of war, but creeps into ordinary daily routines. Militarization is such a pervasive process, and thus so hard to uproot, precisely because in its everyday forms it scarcely looks life-threatening.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Gender-Specific Roles in (Ir)regular Armies**

Men and women may be involved in or actively support conflict for similar reasons, including forced recruitment, agreement with the goals of war, patriotism, religious or ideological motives, educational opportunities and economic necessity.<sup>10</sup> Brett and Specht, however, also point out the different reasons that girls and boys give for joining the army.<sup>11</sup> Joining the army is often the only way to survive, but in some cases, women have joined the army to obtain equal rights and liberties, as well as to flee or fight oppression. Various liberation and revolutionary movements have included women’s rights and equality for men and women in their programmes for political change.<sup>12</sup> In Eritrea, for instance, total dedication of all members to the liberation movement erased all the other identities of family, region, clan and class.<sup>13</sup> In Guinea-Bissau, women were recruited before their husbands on many occasions, because they were so totally absorbed by the ideas of the revolution.<sup>14</sup> In El Salvador, many women

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<sup>7</sup> Karame, 1999, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> Enloe, 1998, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Enloe, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Sørensen, 1998, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Brett and Specht, 2004, Chapter 5.

<sup>12</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3, quoting Wilson, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3, quoting Urdang, 1979.

joined the guerrillas because they hoped it would change their lives and free them from oppression at home and in society at large.<sup>15</sup> Armies have also actively recruited women, particularly to add legitimacy or symbolic power to their war efforts. The female fighter as a symbol has been very important in Eritrea, and also came to stand as a symbol of socialist Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> Female combatants were also recruited because of their desire to prove themselves, which encouraged male combatants to do their best as well.<sup>17</sup> There is also some evidence from research on Mozambique's armed national liberation struggle that women and girls were more receptive to army discipline and 'new' values than men and boys, and more obedient and easier to train.<sup>18</sup>

However, the fact that warring parties have valued women should not obscure the fact that many women, like numerous men and boys, have joined armies, in particular 'irregular' armies, against their will.

Women joining the armies – either voluntarily or under duress – tend to have four different roles, namely those of *combatant*, *support worker*, *abductee*, and *wife/dependant*. Relatively few women, compared with men, operate as combatants who are actively engaged in fighting. This may have to do with the fact that – allowing for large variations between countries (Box 1) – there are many more male than female soldiers, particularly in regular armies. However, it is also caused by underlying notions of masculinity and femininity, which tend to associate women less with warfare than men. Nevertheless, the Netherlands should ensure that DDR programmes are accessible for all female combatants.

#### **Box 1: Women Tamil Tigers in Combat Roles**

Women initially performed paramilitary and support roles in the Tamil movement but after 1985 were also used in combat. It is believed that currently, three out of the ten members of the Central Committee (highest decision-making body of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – LTTE) are women. Of the estimated total cadre strength of 10,000–15,000, women account for nearly one-third, and are inducted in all units of the organization – fighting, political, administrative and intelligence. Reportedly, there is no discrimination based on sex when it comes to training and combat operations, and slogans about 'equity for the nation and equality at home' are common. Since women are generally perceived as less dangerous in public places, they have also been used in suicide attacks. Manoharan, however, suggests it is not clear whether recruitment of women was solely to reinforce social and national freedoms, or whether it was a response to severe shortages of manpower in the mid-1980s.<sup>19</sup>

Most women in armies have support roles, and no combat roles. A relatively large number of women, compared with men, operate in armies as cooks, messengers, doctors, logisticians, etc. They are not directly engaged in fighting, and therefore tend not to carry a weapon. Without a weapon, they often cannot prove that they have participated in armies during conflict and thus get excluded from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) assistance after conflict (Box 2).<sup>20</sup> So if the Netherlands wishes to open up DDR programmes for women in support roles, it should develop a

<sup>15</sup> Ibañez, 2001, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Barth, 2002, Chapter 3.

<sup>18</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3, quoting Arthur, 1998; Brock-Utne, 1987; and Menkhaus and Prendergast, 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Manoharan, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> UN Department for Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA), 2003, p. 26.



wider range of eligibility criteria – rather than just the criterion of having handed in a weapon – to ensure that these women have access to the DDR programme.

### **Box 2: Soldiers in Support Roles Excluded from Assistance**

Some male but particularly female combatants in support roles have found it difficult to prove their active participation in war, especially females in irregular armies,<sup>21</sup> and consequently often have not been included in assistance programmes. In Mozambique, women, but also some men in support roles, often were not incorporated in the demobilization programme.<sup>22</sup> In Sierra Leone and East Timor women without guns were not involved in demobilization programmes.<sup>23</sup> In Sierra Leone's DDR programme, ex-combatants initially had to hand in a weapon in exchange for assistance. This 'one-person-one-weapon' approach was later changed into group disarmament, in which the commanders involved provided lists of former combatants to be disarmed. However, since many women and girls in the army fulfilling support roles were not perceived as combatants, they largely remained excluded from assistance.<sup>24</sup>

The third type of women's role is that of abductee (Box 3). In a growing number of conflicts, women have been abducted to join armies, particularly irregular armies. They have been subjected to sexual violence and exploitation, and have been forced to marry army commanders in their own ranks. In addition, though, they may have fulfilled the same combat and support roles as many other women in the army. If donors such as the Netherlands wish to distinguish abducted women from other women combatants and women support workers, they should clarify how the two groups actually differ.

### **Box 3: Abduction and Forced Recruitment of Women**

In Mozambique, tens of thousands of girls and boys were abducted – mainly by the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) – during the civil war and pressed into service. Boys younger than eight years old helped in the base camps until they were old enough for military training; girls were kidnapped for the sexual gratification of the men, to cook, clean, and do the laundry.<sup>25</sup> Although hardly receiving any attention, boys are also recruited as 'wives' in various countries.<sup>26</sup> A woman in Sierra Leone relates how she was forced to join the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) for three years, and was made the 'wife' of a man for two years. Many women and, particularly, young girls were forced into such marriages, labelled as 'jungle marriages', 'bush marriages', or 'AK-47 marriages'.<sup>27</sup> In Rwanda, women and girls were detained by military officers and forced to live with them. Other young girls, mainly Tutsi, commonly called 'ceiling girls' because they were found hiding in the ceilings of huts – were taken as 'war booty'. The combatants who found them sent them to their superior officers. In some cases, the girls unsuccessfully attempted to escape their 'liberators/abductors'.<sup>28</sup> The Tamil Tigers also forcibly conscripted young men and women, and some female cadres have been used as suicide bombers.

Women's fourth role in armies is that of wife and dependant. They are the female family members of male combatants. They may follow their male counterparts into the bush and live in the direct vicinity

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, 2002, p. 130; Barth, 2002, Chapter 2 quoting Zimbabwe Women Writers, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Baden, 1997, Chapter 8.2.

<sup>23</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, p. 116; United Nations, 2002, p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002, pp. 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> de Abreu, 1998, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication with Irma Specht, Director Transition International.

<sup>27</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, p. 116; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Turshen and Twagirumariya, 1998, p. 108.

of the barracks and camps; after the conflict is over, they too need to take up their civilian life again. In order to gender-sensitize the DDR process, the Netherlands should take into account the fact that male ex-combatants usually enter DDR programmes together with their wife and dependants. It should ensure that DDR programmes do not treat the male ex-combatant as the sole beneficiary, and instead see the male ex-combatant together with his family as a beneficiary unit.

In practice, women in armies usually combine more than one role. In reviewing the case of Sierra Leone, Mazurana and Carlson conclude that the experience of women and girls in the fighting forces was complex—they were abductees and dependants, but they were also involved in the planning and execution of the war. They were fighters, spies, cooks, mothers and wives at the same time, and thus fulfilled multiple roles that could not be separated.<sup>29</sup> Therefore the key challenge for DDR programmes and complementary development assistance programmes is to adequately address the needs of *all* women who joined armies during conflict, irrespective of whether they took active part in combat.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. Dynamic Gender Relations in the Army

‘Traditional’ relations between women and men change in the military.<sup>31</sup> There is a tendency towards more equal gender relations compared with those in the pre-conflict phase. Sameness instead of difference between women and men is encouraged. As soldiers themselves state, ‘in armies women ought to live and act similarly to men’ and ‘women and men become comrades as combatants’. Men and women in armies tend to share danger, living conditions and roles, and often have access to training and education that is not gender-stereotyped.

While women benefit when new opportunities open up, they may also ‘masculinize’, adopting the masculine attitudes and values prevailing in the army, rather than influencing (‘feminizing’) the army.<sup>32</sup> Although women clearly benefit from more egalitarian gender relations in armies, this is generally more than offset by the frequency of sexual slavery and violence against women and girls occurring within armies. Mackay and Mazurana found that egalitarian gender relationships in fighting forces were not evident in the three post-conflict countries they studied – instead, they concluded that women and girls were subjected to oppression, gender-specific violence, abusive and violent relationships, with few opportunities to exercise autonomy.<sup>33</sup>

The relatively more egalitarian gender relations prevalent in armed forces tend to revert to pre-existing patterns when peace arrives. Whereas all combatants, from both regular and irregular armies, have difficulties in reintegrating into civilian life, reintegration is often more complex for female combatants, especially because it tends to go hand in hand with the reintroduction of prevailing pre-conflict gender relations.<sup>34</sup> Female combatants need to assimilate again into a society in which gender stereotypes are much more rigidly upheld than within the military, even despite the masculinist culture in the army.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, female ex-combatants face a number of additional issues such as those

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<sup>29</sup> Adapted from McKay and Mazurana, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> See de Watteville (2002), Barth (2002), Farr (2002), BICC (2002a), and UNDDA (2001, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3; Farr, 2002; de Watteville, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 3.

<sup>33</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> See, among others, Baden, 1997, Chapter 8.2.

<sup>35</sup> Farr, 2002, p. 30, quoting Shikola, 1998.

concerning health, bringing up children born as a result of rape, ostracism, domestic violence, fear and negative stigmatization. Female ex-combatants often opt not to return to their communities, but instead remain in exile or relocate to avoid reverting to traditional ways of living and restrictive social norms. A Dutch policy that promotes gender-sensitive DDR programmes could well attempt to mitigate the effects of negative changes and to harness the effect of positive changes in gender roles and relations.

## **5. Challenge: Providing Post-Conflict Assistance to all Women who have been Involved in Armies**

The key challenge with respect to gender and DDR is to find appropriate ways to identify and target *all* women who joined the (ir)regular armies, and to provide them with adequate assistance. This especially requires a clear division of labour between DDR programmes and complementary development assistance programmes. While there are numerous possible modalities, the Netherlands aims at DDR programmes that target women combatants, women support workers and women dependants. Additionally, it aims at complementary development assistance programmes that provide assistance to women who were abducted, but also to widows and children who require separate, special attention. The bottom line of the Dutch policy is that all women in armies must receive adequate support in order to take up their civilian life again after conflict.

This key challenge raises two questions, which this section will further address. First, why do current DDR programmes and complementary development programmes not yet assist all women and men in (ir)regular armies? And second, why should they assist all women and men in (ir)regular armies in the near future?

### *5.1 Reasons for not Assisting all Women who have been Involved in (Ir)regular Armies*

So far, most post-conflict assistance to women in armies is probably provided through DDR programmes, which generally begin operating in the wake of a peace accord or when the security situation permits. However, this DDR assistance, for a number of reasons, does not reach women in armies.

*First*, some DDR programmes tend not to target women in armies at all. This relates to the fact that the overriding rationale behind DDR programmes is to increase security by disarming combatants and that social objectives are of secondary consideration. DDR programmes are not primarily meant to reward or assist combatants, but are designed to restore security by ‘keeping them off the street’<sup>36</sup> or ‘buying the peace’.<sup>37</sup> As female combatants are not directly regarded as a major security threat, they are insufficiently targeted by DDR programmes, as for instance was the case in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and various other countries.

*Second*, as the resources of most DDR programmes are invariably scarce, the programmes tend to be narrowly targeted and adopt a narrow definition of an ex-combatant. They usually target only those female ex-combatants with a weapon. But even if women have carried a weapon, they still may find it difficult to prove that they were active combatants, especially if there is group disarmament, as was

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<sup>36</sup> Specht, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Arthy, 2003.

shown in Box 2, and women have to rely on male superiors for confirmation of their combat status and hence eligibility for DDR support.

*Third*, even if DDR programmes are willing to support women who joined (ir)regular armies, they are unable to trace them, as these women tend to quickly disappear from the scene after the fighting is over. One reason that women's participation in conflict may become 'invisible' or minimized in the post-conflict phase is that traditional gender relations are reintroduced, so women are expected to revert to more traditional and less visible roles. This tendency is well expressed in the French saying: *"Il y a plus inconnu que le soldat, c'est sa femme"* ("If there is anyone more unknown than the soldier, it's his wife").<sup>38</sup> As Shikola notes in the case of Namibia: "Men appreciate women who cook for them and they respect women who fought in the war with them, but after independence they did not really consider women as part of the liberation struggle."<sup>39</sup> This appears to be true also for other countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. *Another reason* is that women do not want to reveal their identity as female combatants, out of fear of negative stigmatization, and association with killings, sexual violence, rape, illegitimate children and so on (Box 4).

#### **Box 4: Female Combatants hiding their Identity**

"Targeting female soldiers is a problem when women do not want to be recognized as combatants after a war is over because of stigma attached to this. An example comes from Liberia, where many women wanted to hide the fact that they had been soldiers. Such women are hard to find – 'You can't find them, it is like they never existed' (Bennet, Bexley and Warnock, 1995) – and consequently they never received any benefits after the war. ... Not only in the case of Liberia, but other cases as well, ex-combatant women are well known to face difficulties in getting accepted in traditional society, and the consequence may be that they do not come forward to receive the assistance they are entitled to, but on the contrary hide their identity."<sup>40</sup>

*Yet another reason* is that women – particularly abducted women who forcibly became the 'wives' of soldiers, and who in some situations are considered as the 'rewards' and property of their captors – do not wait for the start of a DDR or complementary development assistance programme, but escape from the army as soon as possible (Box 5). McKay and Mazurana, in their study of Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, refer to this process as spontaneous reintegration – a large number of girls spontaneously found their way home and thus did not receive DDR benefits or social reintegration assistance in the form of physical, material or psychosocial help.<sup>41</sup> They often face huge demobilization and reintegration challenges, and in many cases may end up in sheer isolation and poverty after conflict.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted from Karame, 1999, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Shikola, 1998, p. 148.

<sup>40</sup> Barth, 2002, quoting Bennet, Bexley and Warnock, 1995.

<sup>41</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004.

### **Box 5: (Abducted) Women in Sierra Leone fleeing from the Army**

Although the Sierra Leone DDR programme is regarded as a success, it did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of women and girls playing a support role in the army or those who were forced to act as the ‘wives’ and ‘sex slaves’ of army commanders. After the conflict, many of these women and girls took the opportunity to get away from their ‘husbands’ without receiving demobilization and reintegration assistance. Even those who stayed did not receive any assistance, as they were considered the dependants of demobilizing male soldiers and not granted individual rights. Hardly any protection and support was available if they opted out or managed to escape these relations. A few efforts were made to provide them with protection and reintegration support but these were largely outside the official DDR programme.<sup>42</sup>

#### *5.2 Rationale for Assisting all Women who have been Involved in (Ir)regular Armies*

Although in current practice, DDR programmes and complementary development assistance programmes do not target all women in (ir)regular armies with assistance, there are various reasons (in fact, the rationale behind UN Security Council Resolution 1325) for doing so.

One reason why DDR programmes should increasingly target women in (ir)regular armies is to ensure *peace and security on the short and longer term*. In the short term – in the emergency stabilization phase – DDR programmes usually focus on the restoration of physical security. They often target combatants with weapons, and provide them with disarmament and demobilization assistance in the first place. In the longer term – in the peace and development phase – DDR programmes often have a more developmental focus. Through reintegration assistance they aim to provide a more solid basis for sustainable development processes. Therefore they cannot be separated from broader development and rehabilitation programmes that aim to restore *human security* or from security sector reform (SSR) programmes designed to strengthen the democratic governance of the security sector, thus contributing to (physical) security in the longer run. Moreover, they cannot concentrate only on (male) combatants with weapons, but also need to target female combatants, female support workers, and wives and dependants of male combatants. It is also women who have to restore human security, and therefore women need to be involved in this broader post-conflict rehabilitation process. DDR programmes want, at the very least, to assist these groups of women to take the first step towards a smooth return to their communities, to psychologically recover from the conflict, to rebuild social relations and the social fabric of their communities, to develop some forms of employment and to generate an income. In addition to DDR programmes, complementary development assistance programmes are still needed. Firstly, because they need to provide assistance to women in (ir)regular armies who are not eligible for DDR programmes, such as abducted women. Secondly, they need to step in where DDR programmes stop, as DDR programmes cannot cover all the rehabilitation and development needs of ex-combatants.

Another reason for providing DDR and complementary development assistance to all women and men who joined (ir)regular armies, and not only to some of them, is that this will reduce the chance of their *re-recruitment* (Box 6). Without viable alternatives for making a living and establishing a future for themselves, these women and men may again be drawn into (ir)regular armies and may again become a genuine threat to security.

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<sup>42</sup> Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002, pp. 1-4.

### Box 6: Re-Recruitment of Women and Girls

Sketchy evidence from Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo indicates how prolonged periods without an income or future can leave (young) combatants angry, disillusioned and frustrated, and drives some of them back into the army or into armed groups.<sup>43</sup> Additional indications of re-recruitment taking place come from Uganda, where girls – initially fighting with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) but later captured or turned over to the government forces – encountered intense pressure to join these government forces.<sup>44</sup> Hence, besides effective protection measures, the recruitment and re-recruitment of (young) combatants may be avoided through long-term reintegration measures focusing on education, employment or other viable economic activity, and the re-establishment of relations with families. The re-recruitment of women and girls in particular can also be avoided by reintegration measures that acknowledge the non-traditional roles they played during conflict, and that prevent women having to take up their traditional, pre-conflict roles again.<sup>45</sup>

A third reason for targeting *all* women and men who joined (ir)regular armies, is to *minimize the impression that assistance programmes reward combatants for having killed and committed violence*. If it is mainly male combatants with a weapon who are assisted, it could almost seem that men and particularly women are being punished for *not* having had a weapon and for *not* having actively participated in the fighting. It could even encourage combatants to fight and kill more in order to become eligible for DDR and complementary development assistance, which obviously is the opposite of what is desired. In addition, favouring (male) armed combatants over (female) unarmed combatants, ignores the fact that (female) unarmed combatants are also in need of assistance (reintegration assistance in particular), perhaps even more than armed male combatants. This lack of post-conflict assistance may directly put them in a disadvantaged civilian position, from which many of them probably will never recover. In order to avoid encouraging such inequalities, DDR and complementary development assistance programmes need to target *all* women and men in (ir)regular armies for assistance.

## 6. Dutch Policy on Gender and DDR

The final question to be answered is what the above-mentioned issues and challenges imply for a Dutch policy on gender and DDR. Therefore this last section will outline some policy elements that will enable the Netherlands to “ensure that gender equality is more systematically integrated in the reconstruction and demobilization programmes that it supports than has been the case in the past”.<sup>46</sup> This will support the Netherlands in promoting the incorporation of gender into the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) in the Greater Great Lakes Region, of which the Netherlands is the largest bilateral donor. It will also help the Netherlands in its efforts to ensure that gender issues are addressed in DDR programmes that are funded by the Dutch Stability Fund.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Brett and Specht, 2004, p. 134.

<sup>44</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004, p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> Brett and Specht, 2004, pp. 129-134.

<sup>46</sup> MoFA/MoD, 2003, p.2.

<sup>47</sup> MoFA, 2004, p.2.

### *6.1 Key Elements of a Dutch Policy on Gender and DDR*

A Dutch policy on gender and DDR should aim towards:

- DDR programmes that do not exclude from assistance any women who joined the (ir)regular armies;
- DDR programmes that ensure that all male and female ex-combatants, including those in support roles, have access to the full package of assistance to which they are eligible under the DDR programme;
- DDR programmes that do not consider the (male) ex-combatant alone, but the ex-combatant together with his wife and dependants as a beneficiary unit;
- DDR programmes that make a distinction between, on the one hand, female and male ex-combatants eligible for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration assistance, and, on the other, vulnerable groups associated with armed forces, such as abducted women, widows and children, who require separate, special attention;
- Complementary programmes (to the DDR program) that provide assistance to abducted women or widows of combatants;
- DDR programmes and complementary assistance programmes for vulnerable women associated with armed forces that provide assistance in a safe and trustworthy way that encourages women – especially abducted women – to actually sign up for such assistance.

### *6.2 Policy Steps and Considerations*

The modalities of the proposed policy need to be further elaborated, where possible in close cooperation with key players – including women’s organizations and networks – in the field. There are a number of key considerations and options that the Netherlands must address if it is to put the envisioned policy into practice. This will take time, because the policy will have to be put into practice in stages.

The most important issues on which the Netherlands has to take action are summarized in Box 7 and discussed in more detail in the following pages (see also the annexe to this paper, which provides a donor checklist on gender and DDR).

### **Box 7: Action Points for the Netherlands on Gender and DDR**

#### *1) Target all women and men in (ir)regular armies with post-conflict assistance:*

- Make certain that DDR programmes target women combatants, women support workers, and women dependants;
- Ensure that development assistance programmes target abducted women (and widows of male combatants);
- Undertake measures to guarantee that women in support roles become eligible for DDR assistance;
- Trace and reach all women in (ir)regular armies in advance of DDR programmes (avoid self-demobilization);
- Adequately inform women on the eligibility criteria, goals, benefits, etc. of DDR programmes;
- Refer abducted women in (ir)regular armies to development assistance programmes;
- Properly prepare abducted women for their reintegration trajectory;
- Protect abducted women against renewed violence from their male counterparts.

#### *2) Gender-sensitize the disarmament and demobilization trajectory:*

- Utilize the momentum of disarmament camps to prepare women's and men's return to civilian life;
- Support new forms of social organization;
- Consider potential gender differences in encampment facilities, pre-discharge information, and other areas.

#### *3) Respond to male and female combatants' different economic, social and psychological reintegration needs:*

- Consider linking reintegration activities for ex-combatants with broader development assistance activities for war-affected communities as a whole;
- Take into account women ex-combatants' limited access to land, relatively few skills, restricted mobility, and the strict division of labour that they may face;
- Prepare communities for the return of male and female ex-combatants;
- Combat negative stigmatization of women who joined the (ir)regular armies;
- Check the need for reintegration rituals such as purification rites;
- Discuss whether and how to establish (separate) veteran groups for female and male ex-combatants;
- Build on existing informal community support structures, including women's organizations and networks;
- Provide adequate psychological counselling for female and male ex-combatants.

#### *6.2.1 All Women in (Ir)regular Armies should have Access to Assistance*

- A first thing for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs to do is to clearly indicate that all women who are part of the army will have access to DDR assistance. Female ex-combatants (including those in support roles) will receive DDR assistance, while the group of abducted women and widows will be referred to separate assistance programmes. This means that a special effort has to be made to identify the latter group of women as they are not formally part of the army. Also, efforts should be made to ensure that men and women in support roles become eligible for assistance under the DDR programme. In particular, female ex-combatants in support roles have found it difficult to prove their active participation in war, especially females in irregular armies.

#### *6.2.2 Trace and Reach Women before the Start of the DDR Programme*

- Irrespective of whether women will receive development assistance or DDR support, it is of key importance to trace and identify them at the outset. As indicated, some women tend to self-demobilize and disappear long before the start of any post-conflict assistance programme. In



order to avoid this, the Netherlands should encourage security and development organizations right at the beginning of the planning phase, or even during the peace negotiation phase, to jointly undertake scoping missions to trace women. For instance, it could hire gender experts and/or local women's organizations to carry out needs assessment missions among women who are still in the army or associated with the army. In these missions, there could be discussions about what both groups of women expect from assistance programmes, how their reluctance to join these programmes can be overcome, how these programmes can best ensure their protection against (sexual) violence, and how best to avoid any further negative stigmatization as women who joined the army. Unless women are explicitly traced and identified in the planning phase, they will remain under-reported. Only after women have actually registered for assistance can the DDR and development organisations start deciding which women are to receive what form of assistance.

- In order to get women on board for the DDR programme, better access to information on the programme is required. Even though it is often difficult to reach all ex-combatants with information on DDR benefits, eligibility and assistance, more effective dissemination of information can help encourage both female and male combatants to sign up for assistance. Information on how they will qualify, on how they will be protected and separated from their male colleagues in the DDR process, and on how facilities such as childcare will be provided, may well increase the number of women who will actually apply for DDR. The participation of local women's organizations in publication information campaigns has proved quite useful, for instance in Liberia.<sup>48</sup>

### 6.2.3 Referral to Development Assistance Programmes

- The women identified as having been recruited for sexual purposes or forced marriage or as the widows of combatants will be brought in contact with development assistance programmes or special programmes for these women. The Netherlands should urge the development organizations to:
  - o Find ways of *preparing these women for their reintegration*. Development organizations may have to discuss their specific reintegration needs and interests, and may have to assemble the women in rehabilitation/reception centres (for trauma counselling) before they are actually transported home and can start the reintegration trajectory.
  - o Ensure the *protection of women* – particularly abducted women – against renewed violence from their male counterparts. It must at all costs be avoided that (abducted) women are brought against their will into the same communities as the so-called 'husbands' they attempted to flee from. Therefore it is most likely that this group of women will be placed in different locations and communities from the women and men in the DDR trajectory.

### 6.4.2 Gender-Sensitizing the Disarmament and Demobilization Trajectory

The Netherlands should give special consideration to the gender aspects of the disarmament and demobilization trajectory.

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<sup>48</sup> Personal communication with Joanna Foster, Gender Adviser of the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL), 2 December 2004.

- *Utilize the momentum to prepare women's and men's return to civilian life.* Demobilization represents a unique opportunity to make female and male ex-combatants aware of their rights as civilians in the post-conflict phase. It is also the moment to advocate for ex-combatants to become part of structures and civil society organizations, which may help them to exercise their rights and continue to organize themselves after conflict. To remain organized is of crucial importance, because the camaraderie that combatants derived from fighting together usually gets lost during demobilization when they are dispersed.<sup>49</sup> New forms of social organization may help them to avoid isolation. For women, being organized may also increase the chance of retaining the more equal gender relations enjoyed in some armies. The timing of support is important here. Ideally speaking, support must be provided before female ex-combatants return home and lose contact with each other. The demobilization phase is thus the right moment to investigate the possibilities of integrating ex-combatants into existing or newly established frameworks for concerted action, such as veterans' groups and women's organizations. At the same time, though, one should be aware of the risk that when ex-combatants remain organized they may block the reintegration process as they continue to be a group on the basis of their wartime role. Finally, the demobilization phase is an excellent moment to ensure that government authorities are aware that female combatants exist and need to be taken into account in the planning and funding of reintegration support.<sup>50</sup>
- *Consider adjustment of demobilization activities and facilities.* Ideally, the demobilization process needs to be tailored to specific needs of sub-groups of ex-combatants such as girls, boys, women, men but also combatants with disabilities, combatants with drug addictions and so on. Seen from a gender perspective, all steps in the demobilization process thus need, where relevant, to be gender-sensitized. These steps include the assembly in encampments, the handing-out of pre-discharge information, registration and the distribution of ID cards, medical screening for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The latter are often prevalent among (ex-)combatants. STD infection rates among combatants in conflict can be fifty times higher or more than among civilians,<sup>51</sup> because combatants are usually young, sexually active, male, single, and in some armies actively discouraged from marrying while enlisted.<sup>52</sup> They are furthermore exposed to rape, as survivors and perpetrators, and are regularly in contact with potentially infected blood. Another important need is for encampments to guarantee *women's safety*, for instance through guards or fenced women's quarters. If such security measures are not taken, then the risk of higher drop-out rates during demobilization substantially increases. Camps may also install special facilities suitable for women, men and children, such as separate sanitation facilities, food adapted to children's needs, and distribution of appropriate clothing for all ex-combatants. Pre-discharge information, for example, must correspond to women's and men's needs. It may cover topics like women's and men's differences in civic rights, land rights, access to credit, access to education and employment assistance, difficulty of being socially accepted in the community of settlement, and domestic violence. Involving a gender specialist in the preparation of such programmes should therefore be considered. Finally, there must be appropriate health provisions as well, including reproductive and children's health facilities and

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<sup>49</sup> Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen, 2001a, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Farr, 2002, p. 23.

<sup>51</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, p. 53.

<sup>52</sup> Carballo, Mansfield and Prokop, 2000, p. 16.

appropriate numbers of female and male staff.<sup>53</sup> The information provided must be not only gender-sensitive, but also locale- and culture-specific. Providing this information during the encampment is therefore preferred, but it can also be provided [ok?] after the ex-combatants' arrival at their destination of choice.<sup>54</sup>

#### 6.2.5 Gender-Sensitizing the Reintegration Trajectory of DDR Programmes

The reintegration is in essence the responsibility of the ex-combatants and their families themselves,<sup>55</sup> but donors and international development organizations often support them in this process as an integral part of DDR programmes to make the communities they return to more receptive to the arrival/return of ex-combatants and to avoid the perception that violence is rewarded. Reintegration programmes should not only target the ex-combatants themselves, but also their families and host communities.<sup>56</sup> They may well be linked with broader development assistance programmes (e.g. community-recovery programmes). In this connection the key reintegration challenge the Netherlands has to address is:

- To what extent *should specific reintegration programmes for ex-combatants be linked with broader development assistance programmes for war-affected communities as a whole?* On the one hand, ex-combatants form a separate group with special needs and are of particular concern because they are particularly susceptible to re-mobilisation. On the other hand, it could be more appropriate to not target them separately so that they do not have to reveal their identity as combatants. Female ex-combatants especially might face serious problems with social integration if their former identity as combatants is revealed. A closer link between reintegration activities for ex-combatants and development assistance activities for war-affected communities could contribute to more effective DDR programmes as well as to more sustainable post-conflict rehabilitation processes.

More specifically, the Netherlands could adopt the following suggestions to render the economic, social and psychological reintegration process of ex-combatants more gender-sensitive:

- *Adapt economic reintegration activities to the different needs and opportunities of female and male ex-combatants.* Economic reintegration for female and male combatants is complicated, because of the scarcity of land, limited number of jobs, and lack of skills and education. Specific difficulties for female combatants usually include the return to prevailing division of labour from before the conflict, women's inability under (non-)statutory laws to own and inherit land, and their restricted mobility because of lack of proper facilities such as childcare. Female ex-combatants may also face the reluctance of employers to recruit them once their history becomes known.

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<sup>53</sup> de Watteville, 2002, pp. 6-9. See also, for instance, Hilhorst, 2001, for quite specific information on gender-sensitizing Eritrea's second demobilization and reintegration process.

<sup>54</sup> See, for instance, Colletta et al., 1996, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Kingma, 2000, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2003, p. 26.

Whereas the economic reintegration of ex-combatants in agricultural areas is usually difficult owing to a lack of access to land, to credit and to labour, their reintegration in urban settings is often just as complicated. Although women and men may well find a job in the urban informal sector, it is often much harder to obtain employment in the urban formal sector simply because there are hardly any formal jobs available in war-torn economies, and competition in the labour market is stiff. On the one hand, special reintegration programmes for ex-combatants may increase chances for urban formal employment, while on the other hand, various cases (as in Ethiopia and Namibia) show that the low level of skills and education make ex-combatants ill equipped to find such formal employment.<sup>57</sup> In Mozambique, many women recruits<sup>58</sup> entered the army at such an early age that they could not even finish their education or gain any work experience.<sup>59</sup> Currently in Liberia, a whole generation of ex-combatants is illiterate because the long conflict has meant schools have been closed for 14 years. Female (ex)-combatants tend to face more difficulties than male (ex)-combatants entering the formal employment sector, since a return to prevailing labour patterns from the pre-conflict phase means a return to a pattern in which women are associated only with informal work. Micro-credit schemes, vocational training programmes, and certificates to confirm existing skills and experience may increase their access to the formal employment sector, but *only as long as such programmes are professionally designed, based on market demands, well adapted to the situation of female ex-combatants, strongly supported by various forms of positive action, and complemented by longer-term economic activities.*<sup>60</sup>

- *Facilitate the social reintegration of female and male ex-combatants equally.* Whereas emphasis is usually placed on the economic independence of ex-combatants, it is often their difficulty in reintegrating into social networks that proves most challenging to manage.<sup>61</sup> For female ex-combatants this may be extra hard, because they have to take on their earlier family roles again, which are so strikingly different from their roles and positions during warfare.<sup>62</sup> They are often accused of promiscuity during conflict and face exclusion and ostracism. Policy options for social reintegration must thus not only facilitate the transition of combatants and their dependants into civilian life, but also help to reshape societal attitudes toward combatants.<sup>63</sup>

Often, communities do not willingly accept returning ex-combatants, whom they regard as conveyors of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, violence and misbehaviour. One option to prepare the community for the return of ex-combatants is through information campaigns by television or radio, or by training community leaders. Another policy option is to establish community development projects, such as community education projects, local infrastructure rehabilitation programmes, or income-generating activities, that may well benefit local communities and stimulate the local market. Special attention should be given to the return of combatants' wives and female ex-combatants. Their social reintegration is often even more complicated. Combatants' wives with a different (ethnic) background from their husbands' are frequently shunned by their husbands' community and even by their

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<sup>57</sup> See, for instance, Colletta et al., 1996; Kingma, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> ILO, 1997, p. 128; Barth, 2002, Chapter 4, quoting Arthur, 1998.

<sup>59</sup> Baden, 1997, Chapter 8.2.

<sup>60</sup> ILO, 1998, p. 41; Kumar, 2001, p. 218.

<sup>61</sup> Kingma, 1996.

<sup>62</sup> See, for instance, Colletta et al., 1996, pp. 12-13; Oklahoma, 1999, p. 91.

husbands themselves. And many female ex-combatants face problems, because their involvement in the army, whether this was voluntary or through being abducted or forced, was already controversial in their community from the start, and was associated with sexual violence and loose sexual behaviour. Consequently, a substantial number of female ex-combatants divorce or become unmarriageable, which frustrates both their social and their economic reintegration.<sup>64</sup>

One option may be to encourage purification rites, which can help the community to accept these women and the women to deal with their trauma. In the cases of, for instance, Angola and Mozambique, such rites have facilitated the social reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly former child combatants.<sup>65</sup> Although their specific impact on female ex-combatants and combatants' wives is still unknown, they may well help the community to accept these women, and these women in turn to deal with their trauma.<sup>66</sup> McKay and Mazurana found that rituals in Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique were used to assist some girls in healing and reintegrating into their communities. Among the community-based rituals were those that welcome the child back, and cleansing rituals that drive out dead spirits, protect the community from contamination by evil influences and call upon ancestors for assistance.<sup>67</sup> However, special sensitivity needs to be employed here, as these practices are often patriarchal in nature, and some are likely to be detrimental to women's/girls' health and well-being. An example is when initiation rituals involve genital mutilation performed by female members of secret societies in order for a girl to be accepted back into society.<sup>68</sup> Local women's NGOs should take a lead in assessing initiation and reintegration rituals and responding to them. Moreover, local women's NGOs can also be instrumental in counselling and guiding female ex-combatants and combatants' wives in a more general sense.<sup>69</sup>

Besides encouraging ex-combatants to integrate into networks of friends, family, church, and the community in general, another option for social reintegration is to establish and promote (in)formal networks among ex-combatants, such as veterans' groups. Networks may provide ex-combatants with a safe place to exchange views, to discuss working opportunities, to become organized, and to build confidence. Intervening agencies should consider supporting separate networks for female and male ex-combatants, because of the sensitivity of the issues discussed and because of their possible different needs and interests, as illustrated in Box 8. The question of whether to form mixed groups of civilians and ex-combatants is still debated. Some argue that the mixed group approach of civilians and ex-combatants has often not worked out because of their different positions in the community,<sup>70</sup> while others state that mixed groups will help ex-combatants to transform their military identity into a civilian one.

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<sup>63</sup> Farr, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> See, for instance, Colletta et al., 1996, p. 14; Kingma, 1997, p. 13; BICC, 2002, p. 34.

<sup>65</sup> Bennett, Bexley and Warnock, 1995, p. 18, and Kingma, 1997, p. 5, but these publications indicate for instance how ex-soldiers in Mozambique had to be ritually cleansed in order to be accepted by the community. For more information, see also [http://www.cfr.org/background/liberia\\_kids.php](http://www.cfr.org/background/liberia_kids.php), or <http://www.africaaction.org/docs99/viol9907.htm>

<sup>66</sup> de Watteville, 2002, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> McKay and Mazurana, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Oklahoma, 1999, p. 91.

<sup>70</sup> Colletta et al., 1996, p. 270.

### **Box 8: The veterans' organization AMODEG in Mozambique**

In 1994, the veterans' organization AMODEG formed a women's branch in response to the fact that only men's issues were being addressed, and started to lobby for equal rights for female ex-combatants. With relative success it focused on issues such as women's entitlements to resettlement allowances, proper clothing for women, psychological support for both women and men, specific economic reintegration courses for women, and the idea that former combatants should be considered as a heterogeneous group including men, women, children and disabled combatants.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, intervening agencies may consider undertaking extra activities for the relatively large number of female ex-combatants who feel that reintegrating at home is impossible. The changes that they have undergone are too great for them to readjust to conventional life again. So they opt to go elsewhere, often placing themselves outside family and community support networks,<sup>72</sup> as well as possibly limiting their chances of receiving assistance from intervening agencies.<sup>73</sup> This points to the need to disseminate information on reintegration programmes as widely as possible, using different channels such as churches and health centres, but also to the need for additional endeavours to ensure their adequate social reintegration outside of their home area.

- *Rely on and assist existing informal community efforts, often led by women, to support social reintegration.* As described in Box 9, local community initiatives often emerge spontaneously to assist in reintegration. These are frequently ignored by development actors, but ought to be supported. Supporting the work of these local community efforts can be an effective and essential ingredient to ensure sustainable reintegration.

### **Box 9: Women Supporting Reintegration in Sierra Leone**

Across Sierra Leone women as individuals and in groups have been critical to the reintegration of former combatants, particularly those excluded from official programmes. It was found in a survey that 55% of respondents indicated that women in the community played a significant role in helping them reintegrate. This was higher than the proportion of responses that mentioned assistance given to them by traditional leaders (20%) or international aid workers (32%). They said community women provided guidance, shared meagre resources, and helped them obtain skills training and education by providing childcare, clothes and food. Moreover, women's organizations also represented models for many of the female ex-combatants—over 65% of respondents stated they would like to join such organizations, which they saw as offering practical assistance. Local community efforts, informal networks, and organizations – primarily led by women – can provide critical support for former combatants. Unlike the international community, they have no exit strategy – if they fail, violence returns to their doorstep. They have scarce resources, their work is rarely acknowledged in official processes, and they receive only limited assistance from the international community.<sup>74</sup>

- *Provide psychological counselling to female and male ex-combatants.*<sup>75</sup> Both conflict and the transition from conflict to peace are mentally demanding for ex-combatants. Many are therefore

<sup>71</sup> Date-Bah and Walsh, 2001, p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, BICC, 2002, p. 41.

<sup>73</sup> Barth, 2002, Chapter 4.

<sup>74</sup> Mazurana and Carlson, 2004.

<sup>75</sup> See, for instance, Colletta et al., 1996; UN Department for Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA), 2001; Farr, 2002.

in need of psychological assistance. They may show typical signs of trauma, such as depression, psychological disabilities, chronic fatigue, and recurrent recollections of traumatic incidents. Whereas the psychological needs of female and male ex-combatants do not necessarily differ, specific psychological problems may arise for some female ex-combatants from the fact that society does not always show sympathy for their refusal to return to traditional roles, and to display submissive behaviour, as is often expected of them.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, it is likely that more female than male ex-combatants will suffer psychologically from gender-based and sexual violence (GBV) committed against them in conflict.

#### *6.2.6 Gendered Monitoring and Evaluation of DDR Programmes*

It has been emphasized above that the international community at large, including the Dutch government, faces a number of considerable challenges in engendering policy and practice in the field of DDR programmes. It has been observed that the present situation is far from ideal and that several obstacles make it difficult to realize the desired improvements. These obstacles are found in bureaucratic and financial donor domains, among the implementing agencies, and in society at large. Consequently, it is unavoidable that changes in policy practice will have to be made step by step, that it also will take time to realize these changes, and that setbacks may be expected. For all these reasons, it is essential to formulate clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for DDR programmes that enable lessons to be learned and best practices to be developed. Consideration should also be given to establishing a regime under which sanctions are imposed in cases of non-compliance, for example when important directives or policy guide lines are wilfully ignored.

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<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Bruchhaus and Mehreteab, 2000, p. 110.

## **Annexe: Donor Checklist on Gender and DDR<sup>77</sup>**

### **Introduction**

This ‘Donor checklist on gender and DDR’ is designed to assist Dutch policy-makers in discussions with the United Nations, the World Bank and other agencies on the gender dimensions of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). It aims to guide them on how best to address gender issues in the planning and implementation of specific DDR programmes.

The focus of the checklist is on the active participation of women in (ir)regular armies during conflict, and on the need to target these women in DDR programmes and complementary development assistance programmes after conflict. It distinguishes four groups of women in the (ir)regular forces: women combatants, women support workers, women who were abducted, and women dependants. It assumes that DDR programmes provide assistance to women combatants, women support workers, and women dependants, and that complementary development assistance programmes are available to address the needs of female abductees. Complementary assistance programmes are also needed to provide a follow-up to DDR programmes. While DDR programmes can only deal with the initial reintegration needs of ex-combatants, development assistance programmes can ensure their more sustainable reintegration and contribute to longer-term stability in the post-conflict trajectory.

The topics that the checklist addresses are: a) the assessment phase of DDR programmes; b) mandates, scope and institutional arrangements; c) DDR package of benefits and incentives; d) assembly and cantonment phase (demobilization); e) disarmament; f) resettlement; g) social reintegration into communities; and h) economic reintegration trajectory. It does not elaborate on the incorporation of gender and DDR into the peace talks and peace accords. However, the relevance of gender in DDR programmes should already be stipulated in peace accords, as these usually determine the framework of the DDR process. Finally, the checklist is meant to be indicative, not exhaustive. Users can best apply it in a flexible way, adding or deleting topics where they deem it necessary.

### **Planning DDR: the Assessment Phase**

Planners at the (inter)national level should develop a good understanding of the legal, political, economic and social context of the DDR programme and of how it affects women and men, both in (ir)regular armies and in the receiving communities. In addition, planners must understand the different needs of women and men, and the specific needs of women according to whether they are combatants, support workers, abductees, wives or dependants. Programme-planners should take into

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<sup>77</sup> This checklist has largely been derived from the UNIFEM publication *Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*, UNIFEM, 2004, pp. 30-40.



account the fact that the choices that women make may be different from those made by men, in terms of post-conflict demobilization and reintegration.

- Gender expertise should be considered an essential element of any assessment mission undertaken by the United Nations, World Bank, or any other relevant body. This applies specifically to those teams with DDR-related mandates, and gender analysis and information should be adequately reflected in reporting;
- The number and percentage of women in ir(regular) armies, as well as their rank and the type of roles they have filled, should be ascertained. Examples of women in combat functions, in support roles (e.g. cooks, spies, messengers), and as soldiers' wives should be included;
- Evidence ascertained in the assessment mission on the prevalence of abducted women in ir(regular) armies, who joined owing to lack of protection, because they were trafficked, forced into marriage and/or used as sex slaves, should inform planning. There are important differences in the services required by each group;
- The assessment team should identify local capacities of organizations already working on DDR-related issues and the key lessons they have learned;
- Along with these community peace-building forums, women's organizations should be routinely consulted on assessment missions, as they are often a valuable source of information for planners and public information specialists – for instance, regarding the community's perceptions of the dangers posed by illicit weapons, attitudes towards various types of weapons and the location of weapons caches, and other problems, such as the trans-border weapons trade. Women's organizations can also provide a window on to local perceptions about returning women in (ir)regular armies;
- Women interpreters familiar with relevant terminology and concepts should be hired and trained by assessment teams to provide assistance to women in (ir)regular armies;
- The assessment team should identify the range of existing attitudes on giving women ex-combatants the option of joining peacetime armies and other security institutions, such as intelligence services, border police, customs, immigration and other law-enforcement services;
- An ongoing assessment must be conducted of the range of attitudes at the local level towards returning female combatants, support workers, and dependants, to anticipate the kinds of obstacles to reintegration, so as to better prepare both the community and those returning to the community;
- Perceptions of the children of women combatants, support workers, and dependants must also be assessed;
- If the assessment team is given the task of identifying sites for cantonment, sites must be able to accommodate separate facilities for women and men as required. Sanitary facilities should be designed in a manner that allows for privacy in accordance with culturally accepted norms, and water and sanitary wear should be available to meet women's and girls' hygiene needs;
- Women's specific health needs, including gynaecological care, should be catered for;
- When planning the transportation of ex-combatants to cantonment sites or to their communities, sufficient resources should be budgeted so as to offer women the option of being transported separately from men where personal safety is a concern;

- The assessment team's recommendations regarding personnel and budgetary requirements for the DDR process should include a dedicated international and local staff of female DDR experts, female interpreters, and female field staff for reception centres and cantonment sites to which female combatants can safely report.

### **Planning DDR: Mandates, Scope, Institutional Arrangements**

DDR processes have traditionally focused on adult male, able-bodied combatants and paid scant attention to the needs of female combatants, female support workers, abducted women, and the wives and dependants of combatants. While a narrow definition of who qualifies as a 'combatant' as generally been excused as arising from budgetary constraints, it has meant that DDR programmes have often overlooked or inadequately attended to the needs of a large segment of women participating in (ir)regular armies. By overlooking those who do not fit the category of 'male, able-bodied combatants', DDR activities are not only less efficient, but run the risk of reinforcing existing gender inequalities in local communities and exacerbating economic hardship for women participating in (ir)regular armies, some of whom may have unresolved trauma and reduced physical capacity due to violence experienced during the conflict.

- Regarding the mandate of the DDR programme, the assessment team together with relevant personnel at UN, World Bank and other agencies' headquarters should draw up a mandate for a gender-sensitive DDR process in compliance with Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). Specifically, the definition of a beneficiary should not be limited to armed combatants, but rather should include those who fulfil support functions essential for the maintenance and cohesion of the (ir)regular armies.
- Definitions of who constitutes a dependant should be carefully examined. Where a male ex-combatant and a woman are living as man and wife according to local perceptions and practices, this should guarantee the woman's eligibility for assistance under the DDR programme. The dependants of an ex-combatant should include any person living as part of the ex-combatant's household under his or her care. This may include, for instance, other wives, children, parents or siblings and members of the extended family.
- Definitions of who constitutes an abducted woman should be carefully drawn up. The definitions should make clear how abducted women differ from female combatants, female support workers, and wives and dependants of combatants. Those who are to be defined as abducted women may not have to be targeted by the DDR programme itself but could be referred to complementary development assistance programmes.
- When the Security Council establishes a peacekeeping operation with mandated DDR functions (or when the World Bank or other agencies establish a DDR programme), components that will ensure gender equity should be adequately financed through the assessed budget of UN peacekeeping operations and not through voluntary contributions alone. From the outset, funds must be allocated for gender experts and expertise to inform the planning and implementation of dedicated programmes serving the needs of female ex-combatants, support workers, and dependants.

- United Nations, World Bank or other donor representatives should facilitate financial support of the gender components of DDR processes, particularly in situations where governments are primarily responsible for disarmament.
- In situations where governments are responsible for the disarmament of ex-combatants, UN, World Bank and other representatives should encourage national DDR commissions to work closely with women's governmental machineries and ministries and women's peace-building networks.
- A gender and DDR component should be included in the training programmes routinely arranged in the context of multidimensional peacekeeping operations. There is a need to increase the technical qualifications of those in leadership positions regarding gender – and gender and DDR more specifically. The UN, World Bank, donor countries and troop-contributing countries should be encouraged to include women and gender issues in all training exercises and policy guidance provided to troops, technical experts and all holders of high-level appointments, such as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. Accountability measures must be developed and applied to ensure that all staff are committed to gender equity.
- Troop-contributing countries should be encouraged and supported to fast-track women for deployment in peacekeeping operations and DDR processes.

### **DDR Planning: the Package of Benefits and Incentives**

Benefits packages can include one or more of the following: financial resources, material resources and basic training. The overall aim should be to ensure that the distribution of benefits enables women to have the same economic choices as men. A good understanding of women's rights (e.g. regarding property ownership) and social attitudes relating to women's and girls' access to economic resources is needed when designing the composition of the benefits package. 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 may go on 'spending sprees' in the discharge phase rather than share their money equitably. 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.

- Planners should pay careful attention to budgeting: reintegration is the costliest and longest process in DDR and requires the largest allocation of resources;
- When planning the demobilization package, women and men should receive equitable basic demobilization benefits packages, including access to land and tools;
- Planning should include a labour market assessment so that a compilation of information of the different job options and market opportunities that will be available to men and women on discharge is available. This analysis should take place as early as possible so that training programmes are ready when ex-combatants need them, and should reflect an understanding of local gender norms and standards about gender-appropriate labour, as well as changes in gender roles that may have occurred during conflict. Opportunities for women's economic independence as well as potential drawbacks for women entering previously 'male' workplaces and professions should be considered;

- If money is disbursed as part of the demobilization programme, the different funding needs and spending patterns of women should be recognized and accommodated (e.g. do women and girls prefer large payments of cash or monthly disbursement? Does either form of payment place women and girls at additional risk?);
- Care should be taken to discuss and pay the financial portion of demobilization packages (if any) with women in private, away from male family members, but discreetly so as not to arouse suspicion and a potentially hostile and violent reaction;
- Women's traditional forms of money management should be recognized and supported (e.g. rotational loan and credit schemes) and, where available, access to banks and the opening of a private bank account to safeguard money should be facilitated;
- Education and training efforts should correspond to the needs and desires of the women and start as soon as possible during the demobilization phase, as experience has shown that women tend to be overwhelmed by household responsibilities and may face restricted mobility once they return home, and are therefore less likely to be able to attend training;
- In many low-income countries, women tend to have lower educational levels, and skills in less profitable occupational areas, than their male peers. Training provided should take this into account through the provision of additional resources for literacy and training in higher-earning skills for women.

### **Assembly and Cantonment (Demobilization)**

Female combatants, female support workers, and female dependants are less likely to come forward to participate in demobilization programmes than their male peers. This may be for a variety of the following reasons: a failure to adequately assess the number of women combatants, support workers, and dependants during the assessment phase so that women are neither expected nor catered for; women having poorer access to news sources, such as radios, and being less able to read than men in many peacekeeping contexts; the stigma of being associated with an armed group during peacetime; or perhaps the perception or fact that only those people with a weapon to hand in can participate in a DDR programme. Efforts should be made to ensure that information about the DDR programme reaches and is well understood by women in the (ir)regular armies.

- Men and women in (ir)regular armies should be equally targeted with clear information on their eligibility for participation in DDR programmes or in complementary development assistance programmes, including information about the benefits available to them and how to obtain them. Concurrently, information and awareness-raising sessions should be offered to the communities that will receive them, especially women's groups, to help them understand what DDR is, and what they can and cannot expect to gain from it;
- The geography of cantonment sites should be reconceived to accommodate the humanitarian and security needs of women, such as regular patrols, fencing, etc. Sites should accommodate the different ages and sexes of ex-fighters. If women are to take advantage of training and education opportunities, childcare provisions cannot be optional or perceived as non-essential;
- In order for women to feel safe and welcomed in a DDR process, and to avoid their self-demobilization, female protection workers at the assembly point are essential. Training should be

put in place for female field workers whose role will be to interview female combatants, female support workers, women who have been abducted, and wives and dependants of male combatants in order to identify who should be included in DDR processes and to support those who are eligible;

- The physical layout of the reception centre should be structured so that abducted women may register separately from their male partners, and receive separate identity cards, which is important as the assembly point may offer a rare opportunity for escape from their captors. From the assembly point they could be referred to complementary development assistance programmes;
- Men and women should be escorted to separate facilities, while being assured and shown that there will be frequent opportunities offered for contact in the initial stages of the demobilization processes, as families may have joint decisions to make about their futures;
- The threat of sexual violence must be fully recognized and appropriate placing of latrines, washing and kitchen facilities must reduce security threats to women. The provision of fuel and water decreases the need for women to leave a secured area, and is therefore an essential service;
- Secure food and water distribution and the provision of hygiene facilities and healthcare, including reproductive and psychosocial health services, are essential. Women may have specific health and psychosocial needs, for instance relating to gender-based violence. Health screening, including reproductive health screening, should be mandatory at all centres. Women who have suffered sexual assault during and after the conflict should be assisted by women who are trained in trauma management and offered counselling services where these are culturally acceptable and appropriate. Such assistance is essential to allow women combatants and women support workers to participate in training and receive any healthcare or counselling services required;
- Opportunities should be provided to educate women about their rights, e.g. the right to own land or the right to have recourse to the law;
- Men and women should be offered equal (but if necessary, separate) access to education about HIV/AIDS.

### **Disarmament**

The disarmament phase in DDR is the first step in the process of turning combatants back into civilians. The efforts in this phase to collect the arms held by fighters are mainly to be seen as a symbolic prelude to a much longer and broader series of initiatives designed to convince a post-conflict society to disarm.

- Armed and non-armed combatants should be separated while weapons are collected;
- Experience has shown that commanders sometimes remove weapons from the hands of women prior to arrival at the assembly point. In the past this has denied women and girls access to services and benefits of the DDR programme. Therefore, other eligibility criteria than that of handing in a weapon should have been developed in order to ensure, for instance, that women support workers are included in DDR programmes;
- Weapons-in-exchange-for-development projects are preferred over weapons-in-exchange-for-cash projects, because they are seen as, among other things, an opportunity to target and train women. They often include the provision of services or goods that can alleviate the burden of care

disproportionately placed on women in many parts of the world, such as responsibility for collecting water and fuel;

- Women's knowledge (both inside and outside the (ir)regular armies) of trading routes, weapons caches and other sources of hidden small arms and light weapons should be recognized and utilized in disarmament planning but, at the same time, attention should be paid above all to the risks that such disclosure can pose;
- Collected weapons should be properly guarded and, ideally, destroyed. The involvement of women's groups in monitoring weapons collection and destruction and as participants in destruction ceremonies can be a powerful way of solidifying community investment in the peace process.

### **Resettlement**

After demobilization, mechanisms should be put in place to facilitate the return of women and men to their destination of choice via a safe means of transportation that minimizes exposure to gender-based violence, or re-recruitment and abduction into (ir)regular armies.

- Women in particular should be properly catered for and 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, with separate vehicles made available if required;
- Women should be free to choose where they will live, electing 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;
- Women and men should be equally informed about and able to access the local demobilization support office.

### **Social Reintegration into Communities**

Although the primary intent of demobilization is to remove combatants from their combat and support roles as quickly as possible, even in the planning stages it is imperative to think about how returning combatants will be received by the civilian community. The period of reintegration will be a long one, and if it is 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. Therefore a combination between special reintegration programmes for ex-combatants and more general development assistance programmes for the receiving communities as a whole should be considered. Special attention is needed for the specific reintegration problems faced by female combatants, female support workers, and female dependants as these usually are even more complicated than those faced by their male peers.

- As part of the broad consultation undertaken with a wide variety of social actors, community awareness-raising meetings should be held to prepare the community to receive ex-combatants. Inclusion of women and women's organizations in these processes should be regarded as essential;

- Receiving communities should be informed about the intention and use of reintegration packages and their potential impact;
- Ex-combatants, their wives and dependants and receiving families and communities need to be sensitized to the difficulties of readjustment to civilian life of people who joined the (ir)regular armies. Messages of reconciliation should also address the plight of women who may have suffered abuse while in the (ir)regular armies and their specific needs;
- Women's organizations should be encouraged and trained to participate in healing and reconciliation work in general and, in particular, to assist the reconciliation and reintegration of ex-combatants from different factions. Have women in the post-conflict zone already begun the process of reconstruction after war? Is this work recognized and supported?;
- The expertise of women combatants, women support workers, and women dependants—which may be non-traditional—should be recognized, respected and utilized by other women. The reintegration of these women should be linked to broader strategies aimed at women's post-conflict development in order to prevent resentment against fighters as a 'privileged' group;
- Radio networks should include women's voices and experiences when educating local people about those who are being reintegrated, and thus reduce any tensions there might be;
- Community mental health practices (such as cleansing ceremonies) should be encouraged to contribute to the long-term psychological rehabilitation of ex-combatants and to address women's specific suffering (often a result of sexualized violence).

### **Economic Reintegration**

Female ex-combatants often find it more difficult than male ex-combatants to achieve economic reintegration. With few job opportunities, particularly within the formal sector, women have limited options for economic reintegration, which has serious implications if they are the main providers for their dependents. Female ex-combatants in particular, who may have become accustomed to a relatively independent and egalitarian life while away, may also find it difficult on their return to adapt to the expectations of traditional communities.

- Special measures have to be instituted to ensure that female beneficiaries have equal training and employment opportunities after leaving the cantonment site. This entails allocating funding for childcare and providing training as close as possible to where the women reside in order to minimize irregular attendance due to problems associated with transport (e.g. infrequent buses) or mobility (e.g. cultural restrictions on women's travel). Obstacles such as employers refusing to hire female ex-combatants, or narrow expectations of the work that women are permitted to do, should be taken into account before retraining is offered. Potential employers should be targeted for sensitization training to encourage them to train and employ these women;
- Measures should be put in place to prevent the ghettoization of female combatants, support workers and dependants on the fringes of the economy. This includes excessive reliance on unpaid or low-paid NGO activity, which might become a substitute for long-term participation in the labour market;
- Women should be given a voice in determining the types of skills that they are taught. Options should be provided to allow women to build on skills acquired during their time with the

(ir)regular armies, including skills that typically may not be considered ‘women’s work’, such as driving or construction jobs. Vocational skills should be taught in economically viable areas, where there is likely to be a long-term market demand;

- 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 mean there is an unwillingness to accommodate female-headed households.



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