Gender and DDR: Lessons Learned from DDR Research

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Editorial note

The findings from this report came from a review of approximately 80 resources by Phoebe Donnelly, Head of the Women, Peace and Security Program and a Senior Fellow at the International Peace Institute. Significant" skriv istället: Editorial input was provided by Frida Gabrielsson Kjäll, Senior DDR Officer at the FBA and Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs, DDR Specialist, FBA.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the FBA.

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Executive Summary

SINCE THE 1980s, women have been targeted for inclusion in only one-third of all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs.[1] Including women in DDR is an essential starting point for developing gender-responsive interventions. But making DDR truly gender responsive means more than just adding women to DDR processes. It requires recognizing and understanding gender as a way to gain insight into context-specific power dynamics. Gender-responsive DDR also encompasses examining assumptions around security and masculinity.

The UN's integrated approach to DDR has the ambitious goals of implementing DDR to build security, protect civilians and even promote gender equality. To work towards these goals requires seeing gendered relationships and how different aspects of integrated DDR processes, including DDR-related tools and reintegration support during conflict, reveal strengths and vulnerabilities of various gendered individuals. The launch of the revised UN approach to DDR in 2019, through the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), presents an opportunity to further strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in DDR.

A main finding of this report is that while research has highlighted the need to include women in DDR processes, there is less research on how to meaningfully integrate women as key actors and leaders. To support women's participation and the integration of gender more broadly, this report provides specific examples of the gender dynamics of DDR processes drawn from countries such as the Central African Republic, Haiti, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Rwanda.

Similarly, while some actors have called for DDR practitioners to consider masculinities, there is little guidance on why and how to do this. This report highlights some of the ways in which militarized masculinities are promoted through membership in armed groups and how new forms of masculinity and pathways to manhood should be purposefully considered in DDR processes.

Finally, research has found that reintegration is the least prioritized component of DDR, yet it is essential for rethinking gendered roles and relationships. Reintegration is a moment of shifting gender dynamics and identities for men, women, boys, girls, and sexual and gender minorities. Failing to plan for the ways that shifting identities have long-term impacts on conflict-affected societies can lead to continuing cycles of violence.

In line with these three themes, this report includes the following recommendations to work towards gender-responsive DDR.

Recommendations.
Integrate gender in the overall objective and aim for integrated DDR processes, including when a DDR-related tool is mandated by a United Nations Security Council resolution.

- Conduct gender-sensitive analyses prior to any DDR-related intervention that include quantitative and qualitative sex-disaggregated data and the gender dynamics and patterns of violence specific to the context. Specifically, assess barriers to the participation of women and girls, and consider former combatants, individuals associated with armed groups and communities set to receive these individuals.

[1] Oliver Kaplan, DDR Program Dataset.

- Partner with civil society organizations and women's groups working on gender issues at the start of any DDR-related intervention, maintain these relationships throughout the intervention, and promote the leadership of national and local partners.

- Prioritize and set aside funding for a long-term plan for the integration of gender that considers and addresses how gender-related expectations of men and women affect the gendered division of labour and the opportunities for a sustainable return to civilian life.

- Develop a shared monitoring and evaluation system to track reintegration interventions across gender, age and other key identity markers over time, and not only the number of participating women.

- Design DDR-related interventions that focus on alternative masculinities and paths to manhood. When it comes to livelihood opportunities, creatively address the interests and types of jobs men and women can fulfil to push back on stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.

- Prioritize the conduct of systematic assessments and evaluations of gender-responsive DDR processes, to better understand the long-term impact of gender-responsive DDR.

- Support research that explores women's and men's motivations for joining and leaving armed groups and compare how these motivations differ across genders, ages and time periods.

List of Abbreviations

AGDTO	Armed Group Designated as Terrorist Organization
CAR	Central African Republic
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPO	United Nations Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARC-EP	The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH	Uited Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
PRR	Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WAM	Weapons and Ammunition Management

Introduction

IN THE MORE THAN FOUR DECADES since the creation of the concept of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), what have researchers learned about DDR activities' relevance to various aspects of the population? In particular, how can DDR be implemented in a way that considers power dynamics and gendered relationships?

DDR programmes began in the 1980s with the ambitious goal of ending protracted civil wars.[2] Since the inception of DDR programs, the concept has evolved to include broader goals like rebuilding institutions, promoting reconciliation across communities and improving gender equality. As DDR has evolved, so too have the normative frameworks around integrating women and a gender perspective into peace and security. In 2000, the first UN Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security articulated the gendered nature of DDR (S/RES/1325). Security Council resolution 1325 calls for all those involved in planning for DDR to consider the different needs of male and female ex-combatants. This resolution marked the beginning of the UN Security Council agenda for Women, Peace and Security, which currently comprises 10 resolutions. No fewer than nine of them reference DDR. Despite the shift in DDR's goals and forms, the need to integrate gender and the questions, around how to do so remain relevant and essential to contexts today.

In reviewing the existing literature on DDR, this report highlights a few themes. The first is that gender-responsive DDR is not just about adding women but taking a holistic view of DDR and considering its different impacts on men, women, boys and girls. The idea that gender and DDR is not only about women is a refrain often repeated among gender experts, yet most policies and programmes are still vague about how to gender DDR apart from counting the number of women who participate. While ensuring that women are represented in DDR processes is essential, looking only at the number of women included is not sufficient for the integration of a gender perspective.

A second key point is that while there are some ideas on how to gender DDR the implementation of these ideas remains a challenge. Additionally, most of the existing research and guidance is narrowly focused on adding women and girls to existing frameworks. There is less guidance and best practices around integrating masculinities as part of gender-responsive DDR. The bulk of research, especially academic research, on gender and DDR focuses on 'DDR programmes' and needs to be updated for today's context, which relies on integrated DDR processes, including DDR-related tools.

Third, the reintegration process is often seen as the most important component component in DDR, yet it is frequently deprioritized due to funding and programme timelines.[3] Shortcomings pertaining to not adequately planning for long-term reintegration can be especially detrimental to gender relationships and equality. There are conflicting views on the gendered challenges of reintegration, with some research noting that women take longer than men to reintegrate and recover from engagement with an armed group,[4] and other studies finding the opposite.[5] The gendered challenges of reintegration likely depend on multiple factors in addition to gender identity, such as context, group dynamics and roles, age and marital status. However, it is clear that reintegration has some unique gender dimensions that should be accounted for in planning for long-term recovery.

This report will begin with a brief history of DDR with an emphasis on its goals and how they have evolved over time. The next two sections focus on two key challenges when gendering DDR – the meaningful incorporation of women and girls into programmes and the relationship between masculinity and DDR. The final section includes a gender analysis of some of the DDR-related tools and evidence from case studies.

The findings from this report came from a desk research review of approximately 80 resources combining academic literature on DDR, key documents from within the UN and other international organizations, and reports by non-governmental organizations. Additionally, the author attended DDR workshops and meetings with experts in the field of DDR.

Key Concepts

When referring to DDR in today's context, this report is discussing integrated DDR processes, including DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support during conflict. DDR-related tools can be used piecemeal and in contexts where the preconditions for a DDR programme are not present.[6] The majority of research on gendering DDR has focused on DDR programmes and not on the other aspects of broader DDR processes. More recently, there has been policy research on weapons and ammunition management (WAM) and community violence reduction (CVR), with some discussion of women's integration into these tools. However, research on the integration of gender in DDR-related tools is largely still missing.

The majority of literature and guidance on incorporating gender into DDR focuses on why it is necessary to design gender-responsive DDR.[7] There are two central explanations for the need to mainstream gender into DDR. One is the "rights-based" framework that holds that women must be included in DDR because they have a right as half of the population, as individuals affected by the conflict and as political actors.[8] Another approach to advocate for gender-responsive DDR focuses on effectiveness, the idea being that DDR processes will be more effective in the long term if they include a gender perspective.[9] More recently, gender experts and UN agencies have noted that including programming related specifically to men and masculinities is also key to successful DDR.[10]

As of the drafting of this report, there have been no assessments evaluating whether gender-responsive DDR is more effective in promoting certain outcomes.[11] However, one study concluded that when women's groups were able to effectively influence a peace process, a peace agreement was more likely to be reached and implemented.[12] It is possible that more-inclusive DDR processes would also lead to more successful peacebuilding results, yet no cross-national research has explored this question. Additionally, gender-responsive DDR, as will be explained in the following section, involves more than adding women to existing processes

The Integrated DDR Standards were originally developed to provide guidance in post-conflict contexts where DDR forms an integral part of comprehensive peace agreements. Following the 2017–2019 IDDRS review, the revised UN Approach to DDR provides guidance to DDR practitioners working in both mission and non-mission settings, as well as for DDR efforts within and outside the framework of comprehensive peace agreements.

[2] Robert Muggah and Chris O'Donnell, "Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development,* vol. 4, No. 1 (May 21, 2015).

[3] This theme emerged from key informant interviews. Michel Thill, In Search of a Winning Formula; Lessons on DDR and Community Reintegration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Social Science Research Council, May 2021).

[4] Christopher Hills, "Gender and Demilitarization in Liberia", in Handbook on Gender and War, Simona Sharoni and others, eds. (Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016).

[5] Jeannie Annan and others, "Civil War, Reintegration, and Gender in Northern Uganda", Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 55, No. 6 (December 1, 2011).

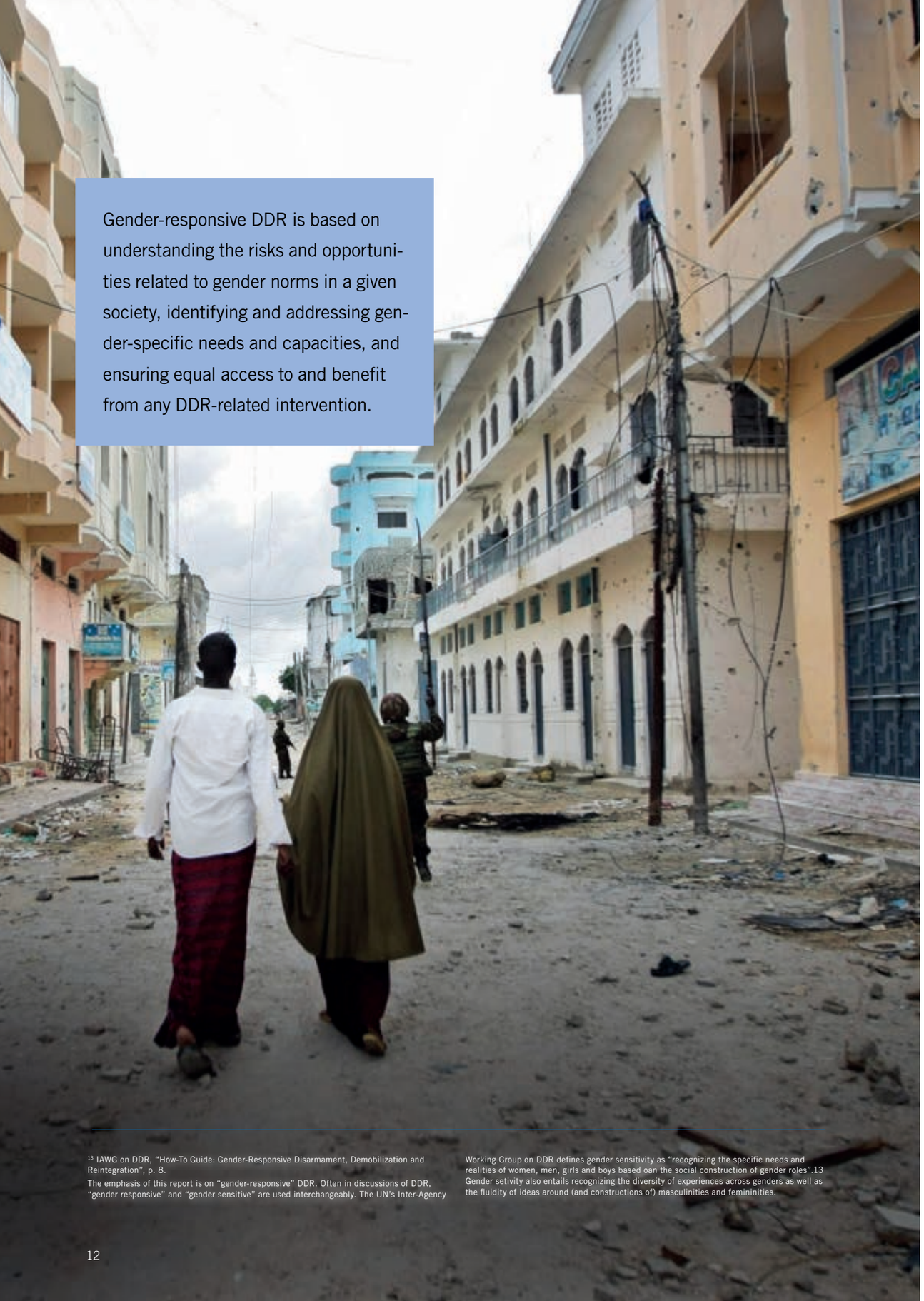
[8] See, for example, references to equity and equality throughout Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), "How-To Guide: Gender-Responsive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration", 2012. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38911-doc-111_how_-to_guide_gender-responsive_disarmament_demobilisation_and_reintegration.pdf.

[9] Kimberly Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia", Human Rights Quarterly, vol. 31, No. 1 (2009); Duriesmith and Holmes, "The Masculine Logic of DDR and SSR in the Rwanda Defence Force"; IAWG on DDR, "How-To Guide: Gender-Responsive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration".

[10] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Blame It on the War? The Gender Dimensions of Violence in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" (2012); United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR", UN DDR Resource Centre, August 1, 2006.

[11] In general, there are challenges and barriers in comprehensive assessments of DDR programmes or tools. For more information, see Franziska Seethaler, "Assessing the Impact of DDR Programmes: Possibilities and Challenges", Policy Brief, United Nations University, March 2016. Available at https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:5546/Assessing_Impact_of_DDR_Programmes_160322.pdf.

[12] Marie O'Reilly, Andrea O Suilleabhain and Thania Paffenholz, "Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes", International Peace Institute, June 2015.



Gender-responsive DDR is based on understanding the risks and opportunities related to gender norms in a given society, identifying and addressing gender-specific needs and capacities, and ensuring equal access to and benefit from any DDR-related intervention.

[13] IAWG on DDR, "How-To Guide: Gender-Responsive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration", p. 8.
The emphasis of this report is on "gender-responsive" DDR. Often in discussions of DDR, "gender responsive" and "gender sensitive" are used interchangeably. The UN's Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR defines gender sensitivity as "recognizing the specific needs and realities of women, men, girls and boys based oan the social construction of gender roles".13 Gender setivity also entails recognizing the diversity of experiences across genders as well as the fluidity of ideas around (and constructions of) masculinities and femininities.

The Evolution of DDR

BEFORE DESCRIBING THE WAYS in which gender has become part of the conceptualization of DDR work today, this report will provide an overview of the evolution of DDR. Understanding the successive phases of DDR illuminates the progression of thinking on DDR, and where and how gender has been included or excluded.

First-generation DDR was focused on helping to end civil wars, particularly in Latin America and Southern Africa.[14] In this phase, programmes were used to break command and control within formed military units, provide benefits to individuals returning to their communities and allow some former combatants to enter security entities. Early DDR programmes were seen as a component of the post-conflict period and were anchored in a peace or ceasefire agreement. The initial conceptualization of DDR focused on security and was targeted at ex-combatants and military units, which were assumed to be composed entirely of men. Thus, the foundational work on DDR focused on men.

The second generation of DDR evolved alongside the broadening mandates of UN peace operations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The goals of DDR programmes became more ambitious, including promoting reconciliation between ex-combatants and communities, rebuilding social institutions, and promoting economic livelihoods for combatants and their dependants.The goals of DDR work today are broader still, and often involve interventions amid ongoing violence in environments where a peace deal has not yet been reached.[16] The UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) recently conducted a study on the way DDR is evolving and cites two key factors that require a change in the way DDR is conceptualized: fewer meaningful political settlements to conflicts, and an increase in violence by non-state actors and in localized conflicts.[17]

In light of these changes, the UN has revised its approach to DDR as framed in the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards. The goals for DDR processes as outlined in the IDDRS are broad and note that DDR can "contribute to preventing conflict escalation, supporting political processes, building security, protecting civilians, promoting gender equality and addressing its root causes, reconstructing the social fabric and developing human capacity."[18]

The IDDRS also outline the preconditions required for the "implementation of a viable DDR programme". These conditions include the signing of a negotiated ceasefire and/or peace agreement, trust in the peace process, willingness of the parties to the armed conflict to engage in DDR and a minimum guarantee of security.[19] Language and terminology in discussing DDR become particularly important because, while these are the preconditions for DDR programmes, UN and international actors can use DDR-related tools and reintegration support (including when complementing DDR-related tools) in contexts where these preconditions are not met.[20]

DDR-related tools include many activities that are related to violence reduction in conflict contexts. According to the IDDRS, DDR-related tools are "immediate and targeted measures that may be used before, after, or alongside DDR programmes or when the preconditions for DDR programmes are not in place." [21]

The IDDRS guide only briefly addresses the use of DDR-related interventions in contexts where UN armed groups designated as terrorist organizations (AGDTO) are operating. It can be challenging for DDR practitioners to operate in these contexts, given the legal dynamics

[14] For a detailed account of the differences between first-generation and second-generation DDR, please see Muggah and O'Donnell, "Next Generation DDR", p. 2.
[16] Ibid., "Ibid, pp. 3-6"
[17] Bonn International Centre for Conversion and DPO, "The Evolving Nature of DDR: Study on Engaging Armed Groups Across the Peace Continuum" (DPO, 2021), p. 5.
[18] United Nations, "IDDRS 2.10: The UN Approach to DDR," UN DDR Resource Centre, November 19, 2019, p. 1.
[20] Ibid., pp.2-3
[21] Ibid., p. 6.

Integrated DDR processes consist of a combination of DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support during conflict.

of ongoing conflict with AGDTOs. The IDDRS briefly notes that "support to programmes for those leaving armed groups labelled and/or designated as terrorist organizations may be provided by DDR practitioners in compliance with international standards". The reference to "international standards" likely relates to Security Council resolutions 2178 and 2396. These resolutions call on Member States to develop prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (PRR) strategies for suspected terrorist actors.[23]

The term "PRR" was first used in 2017, but it still does not have a clear and agreed upon definition. According to the Security Council, PRR strategies should be for individuals with links to UN-designated terrorist organizations. [24]

DDR and PRR are considered separate processes and are usually separated in policy frameworks. PRR is associated with counter-terrorism actors and approaches. However, some of the discussions around gender and PRR are applicable to DDR. Material from the UN related to PRR highlights the importance of gender, with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) articulating its focus on gender dimensions and women's rights in responding to terrorism. [25] UNODC notes that PRR strategies should "avoid being based on stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women in terrorist groups and pay particular attention to the situation of women and children who were associated with the terrorist group".[26]

[22] Ibid., p. 6.

[23] See Sarfati and Donnelly, "Protection Dilemmas", for a discussion on PRR and its relationship to DDR. This report uses a broader understanding of AGDTO than just UN designated groups and also includes groups listed by the U.S. State Department as foreign terrorist organizations.

[24] S/RES/2396 (2017).

[25] UNODC, "Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategies", n.d. (accessed on August 10, 2021). Available at https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/expertise/prosecution--rehabilitation-and-reintegration-strategies.html.

[26] UNODC, "Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategies".

Gendering the Components of DDR

THIS REPORT BEGINS BY PROVIDING an overview of how gender informs an understanding of the three key components of a DDR programme. This section relies on the framing for gendering DDR developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[27] Each component of a DDR programme can be viewed with a consideration of its different impacts on men, women, boys, girls, and sexual and gender minorities.

Disarmament

Disarmament can increase combatants' feelings of vulnerability, and the reasons for this can differ for men and women. For men and boys, weapons can be a way to model militarized masculinity – a concept described as the "fusion of certain practices and images of maleness with the use of weapons, the exercise of violence, and the performance of an aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity."[29] In particular, disarmament has emblematic impact for men and boys and can be perceived as the removal of symbols of masculinity, protection, and power.[30]

For women, disarmament may threaten the power or respect they felt their weapon gave them while they were combatants. While in many cases men also gain perceived power from access to weapons, this power is particularly potent for women who are often ignored in political and conflict processes. Given this moment of vulnerability related to gender identities, DDR guidance notes that pushing for disarmament without guarantees around security, justice or integration into the security sector can undermine the DDR process.[33]

In general, while some male combatants may have challenges accessing DDR activities, "women – as a group – are often excluded from DDR programmes, while this is never the case for men".[28]

Some individuals in armed groups may feel an attachment to being armed and to their weapons. For example, female ex-combatants in Colombia described sentimental feelings about their time in armed groups, or "weapons nostalgia".[32]

An older study on women's engagement in disarmament processes outside of a DDR context, in Albania in 2003, sought to demonstrate that women's work in disarmament could have broader benefits for gender equality than just those related to peacebuilding. For example, women who received disarmament education felt they became more adept at dealing with authorities and had more access to paid work as a result of this education.[33]

[27] UNDP, "Blame It on the War?"

[28] Jakana Thomas, "Gendered Security Sector Reform: What Can We Learn from Women's Participation in Community-Based Armed Groups?" Policy Note, Community Based Armed Groups Series, RESOLVE Network, February 1, 2022, p. 9.

[29] Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities", p. 5.

[30] Savannah de Tessières, Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context: A Handbook for United Nations DDR Practitioners, 2nd ed., (Department of Peace Operations and Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2021), p. 83.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Roxani Krystalli, "Engage with Combatants as Interlocutors for Peace, Not Only as Authorities on Violence," in Feminist Solutions for Ending War, Megan MacKenzie and Nicole Wegner, eds. (London, Pluto Press, 2021), p. 157.

[33] Vanessa Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Processes," Disarmament Forum, October 2003, p. 11.

Demobilization

Demobilization can lead participants to lose a sense of collective identity. Even the way ex-combatants discuss demobilization can be gendered. A female ex-combatant in Colombia declared, "Demobilisation is a castration."[34] The challenges related to identity can differ for men and women and between different men and women. For example, in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the group's leadership used forced marriage to build families that operated homesteads together.[35] For some women, the relationship with the co-wives they lived with was positive and a place for deep connection, whereas other women viewed their co-wives as a threat to their safety.[36]

Research also highlights the bonds men can build in armed groups. Losing that community and social ties can have an isolating effect on some men.[37] Demobilization is a key opportunity to discuss ex-combatants' expectations related to gender roles after they leave cantonment.[38]

For some women, being a part of an armed group can provide them with a specific form of political power or, as one female ex-combatant in Colombia put it, "mobilization is a social and political practice."[39] This same sentiment was echoed by another Colombian female ex-combatant, who noted that "demobilization is depoliticization".[40] This feeling of depoliticization can be amplified in the reintegration process, during which women are often expected to return to traditional roles and their voices and expertise are only seen as relevant as victims of conflict or as peacemakers.

Reintegration

Reintegration is a process where ex-combatants are supposed to form new civilian identities. These identities will differ for men and women and may involve different challenges and opportunities related to gender. For example, women inside armed groups may have forms of power they did not have access to in civilian life.[41] Men may face a similar challenge reintegrating because of the perceived power they had in an armed group. For some men, being in an armed group represented a path to manhood unavailable to them in civilian life because of a lack of economic or other forms of power.[42]

Militarized masculinity: "fusion of certain practices and images of maleness with the use of weapons, the exercise of violence, and the performance of an aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity".

Reintegration can be viewed as transforming one's identity, and this process can involve the psychological burden of hiding one's ex-combatant status and experiences as a combatant.[43] This psychological burden is likely felt differently depending on one's age and gender. In Liberia, DDR officials explicitly told ex-combatants to "forget about the war" and not mention having been a combatant to avoid being stigmatized.[44]

There is some data around reintegration pathways based on the DDR process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Out of the 110,000 combatants who formally registered for demobilization, 4,524 were women.[45]

[34] Krystalli, "Engage with Combatants", p. 157.

[35] Phoebe Donnelly, "Wedded to Warfare: Forced Marriage in Rebel Groups", PhD dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 2019.

[36] Evelyn Amony, I Am Evelyn Amony (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); Grace Acan, Not Yet Sunset: A Story of Survival and Perseverance in LRA Captivity (Kampala, Uganda, Fountain Publishers, 2017).

[37] Joshua Goldstein, War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[38] UNDP, "Blame It on the War?"

[39] Krystalli, "Engage with Combatants", p. 158.

[40] Ibid.

[41] UNDP, "Blame It on the War?"

[42] Chris Dolan, "Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States – A Case Study of Northern Uganda", in Masculinities Matter! Men, Gender and Development, ed. Frances Cleaver (London and New York, Zed Books, 2002).

[43] Erin McFee, "The Double Bind of 'Playing Double': Passing and Identity Among Ex-Combatants in Colombia," American Psychological Association, vol. 22, No. 1 (2016).

[44] Michanne Steenbergen, "Female Ex-combatants, Peace, and Reintegration: Reflections on the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration Programmes in Liberia and Nepal", LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series No. 25/2020.

[45] Thill, In Search of a Winning Formula, p. 9.

This number is likely an undercount, because combatants were required to hand in a weapon in order to register, and many women ex-combatants may not have had access to such a weapon. However, an interesting finding was that of the women who registered for demobilization, 2,396 chose reintegration into society, and the rest preferred army integration. The fact that almost equal numbers of women decided to reintegrate into society, as in the army is notable, and it would be useful to understand the women's motives for choosing the different options.

In a study on reintegration in Colombia, researchers examined a sample of demobilized persons that included 232 women and 1,253 men. They found that men were more prone to recidivism and that "their feelings of loss of status after demobilization can be emasculating and turn into emotional impulses toward illicit activities."[46] However, other researchers question whether it might be easier for women to return to violence than to their communities because DDR activities often fail to offer incentives to women to leave groups in the same way they do the male combatants.[47]

Research on reintegration has demonstrated the importance of context in terms of how gender stereotypes function across communities. For example, in the Lake Chad Basin, a study found that in certain instances women were seen as more dangerous than men because they were perceived as easily influenced by men to participate in violence.[48] This perception of women has affected the reintegration process because in some communities, if a woman leaves Boko Haram and her husband remains with the group, the community doubts the sincerity of the woman's reintegration.

[46] Oliver Kaplan and Enzo Nussio, "Explaining Recidivism of Ex-combatants in Colombia", Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 62, No. 1 (2018), p. 87.

[47] Thomas, "Gendered Security Sector Reform", p. 9.

[48] International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Gendered Dimensions of Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation in the Lake Chad Basin Region". Geneva, 2021.

Women and Girls in DDR Processes

SINCE THE 1980s, women have only been included in approximately one-third of all DDR programmes.[49] As a consequence, women and girls have largely missed out on the potential support provided through DDR. This omission can harm women and girls associated with armed groups, as well as women and girls in communities where members of armed groups are reintegrating. [50]

Historically, the rationale behind DDR has been to reduce the perceived security threat posed by ex-combatants left without livelihoods and employment after demobilization. While the IDDRS guidelines have a broader focus than just security threats from ex-combatants, they articulate the goal of DDR processes as being primarily "to address the security challenges posed by members of armed forces and groups" The guide goes on to note that "provisions should be made for the inclusion of other groups (including civilians and youth at risk), depending on resources and local circumstances".[51] A focus on security threats tends to mean an emph51asis on men and boys.[52] While research demonstrates the key role women play in armed groups,[53] if the focus of DDR is only geared towards armed combatants (as opposed to all individuals supporting violent groups), women and girls will not be incorporated holistically. While women and girls can be combatants in violent groups, historically they have not made up the majority of armed groups and are usually not seen as security threats.[54] This is because they are stereotyped as either being peacemakers or victims. One review of the DDR literature concluded, "The DDR process is seen as more important for men to avoid discontent, unemployment, idleness, and further mobilization to violence."[55]

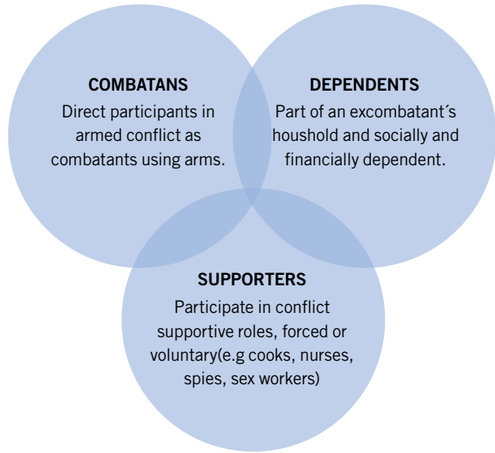
Because of the assumption that men are violent and women are peaceful, women and girls will be delinked from security concerns post-conflict and instead viewed as "social problems", whereas men are viewed as security threats or concerns.[56] This is not an ideal outcome for men and boys (who are narrowly viewed as security threats) or women and girls (who are not prioritized because they are not seen as security threats).

While research shows that men make up the majority of armed combatants, it is also clear that the support of women and girls is essential to the perpetration of violence in conflict. For example, one study tested the ways in which women in armed groups advanced rebel group goals and found that rebel groups use women members to secure support from different international actors.[57]

Researchers have challenged the assumption that men are the default actors in conflict through quantitative data showing women are active participants in well over half of the world's rebel groups.[58] Women's roles in rebel groups are varied. Women are most frequently in support or non-combat roles. However, in nearly one-third of all rebel movements, women take part in violent attacks, and in over one-quarter of rebel groups, women occupy leadership roles. In seeking to understand why women participate in varying roles and levels across different armed groups, some researchers argue that the political ideology of an armed group is the key explanatory factor.[59] Another study found that organizational factors such as group size and the use of terrorist tactics explained women's varying levels of participation in rebel groups.[60]

In addition to the need to recognize women as combatants in armed groups, the general categories used in DDR processes (like ex-combatant) are too broad and perpetuate gender narratives. In examining the DDR process in Liberia, one study highlighted problems with the generic category of "ex-combatant", which was meant to apply to fighting groups in every context.[61] The researchers found that framing ex-combatants as a threat (or using a "threat narrative") can be counterproductive for reintegration and peacebuilding goals. Importantly, in Liberia, the threat narrative of ex-combatants came from a view of the war there as "unnecessarily violent, and simply unnecessary, an irrational reflection of the violent urges of rag tag groups of angry men".[62] In describing this threat narrative, researchers explained that "danger attaches to the figure of the ex-combatant because DDR discourse biologically embeds violence in the character and disposition of ex-combatants".[63] The use of the term "biologically" has implications for the ways in which ex-combatants are implicitly labelled as men. When women were included in Liberia's DDR activities, it was only as a "special target group" distinct from combatants.[64]

Given the need to categorize individuals during DDR, DPO recently identified three labels to use for women in DDR programmes. The first is combatants, defined as direct participants in armed conflict using arms. The second is supporters, who participate in conflict in support roles in a forced or voluntary capacity, including as cooks, nurses, spies and/or sex workers. And finally, the third role is that of dependant, which describes women who are part of an ex-combatant's household and socially and financially dependent on the ex-combatant.[65] (Venndiagram/Graphic DPO report)



UN Department of Peace Operations summary of categorizations for women beneficiaries in DDR processes[66]

UN Department of Peace Operations summary of categorizations for women beneficiaries in DDR processes These categories are helpful in recognizing the scope of women's engagement with armed groups, but conceptually there is still confusion around the roles of victims and perpetrators and the notion that some women can voluntarily join an armed group while other women may be forcibly recruited into the same group. Generally, seeing women as a diverse and complex set of political actors is a challenge to mainstreaming gender in DDR and will continue to be unless discussed in practical and policy-relevant ways.

[49] Oliver Kaplan, DDR Program Dataset. (forthcoming),

[50] Mazurana, Krystalli and Baaré, "Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration".

[51] United Nations, "IDDRS 2.10", p. 19.

[52] See e.g., Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Gendering the Boy Child in the Context of Counterterrorism: The Situation of Boys in Northeast Syria," Just Security, June 8, 2021.

[53] Alexis Henshaw, Why Women Rebel: Understanding Women's Participation in Armed Rebel Groups (New York, Routledge, 2017); Dyan Mazurana, "Women, Girls, and Non-State Armed Opposition Groups," in Women and Wars, Carol Cohn, ed. (Cambridge, UK, and Malden, Mass., Polity, 2013); Jakana Thomas and Kanisha Bond, "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations," American Political Science Review, vol. 109, No. 03 (August 2015); Reed Wood and Jakana Thomas, "Women on the Frontline: Rebel Group Ideology and Women's Participation in Violent Rebellion," Journal of Peace Research, vol. 54, No. 1 (January 2017).

[54] Some armed groups have deliberately exploited this tendency not to view women as potential members. Lindsey A. O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?", Security Studies, vol. 18, No. 4 (December 2, 2009).

[55] Wenche Iren Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR): A Commented Bibliography" (Peace Research Institute Oslo [PRIO], 2016), p. 6. Available at https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=9250.

[56] Megan MacKenzie, "Gender and Post-Conflict Security", in Handbook on Gender and War, ed. Simona Sharoni and others (Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016).

[57] Devorah Manekin and Reed Wood, "Framing the Narrative: Female Fighters, External Audience Attitudes, and Transnational Support for Armed Rebellions", Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 64, No. 9 (2020).

[58] Henshaw, Why Women Rebel.

[59] Wood and Thomas, "Women on the Frontline."

[60] Thomas and Bond, "Women's Participation in Violent Organizations", p. 503.

[61] McMullin Review of International Studies, p. 393.

[62] Ibid., p. 394.

[63] Ibid., p. 396.

[64] Ibid., p. 410.

[65] Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Section of the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI), DPO, "Gender-Responsive DDR: Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda", n.d., p. 10.

[66] DDR Section, "Gender-Responsive DDR".

Finally, although there is an effort to include women members of rebel groups in DDR, there has been little attention to women in pro-government, self-defence or civil defence forces.[67]

Barriers to Inclusion

Women should be included in the earliest phases of planning for DDR, ideally in the peace process phase.[68] The IDDRS module "Women, Gender and DDR" reiterates a call across the UN to insist on 30 per cent female participation in any decision-making forum. The guide notes that if this 30 per cent quota is not possible, DDR planners must at least consult women.[69]

One method to include women in DDR processes early on is to focus on outreach and access to information on programming and available services. This outreach can be targeted directly to women ex-combatants and women associated with armed groups or communicated to key people in communities who can help spread the information.[70]

Ideally, if diverse women's voices are represented in the planning for DDR, some of the common errors that discourage or exclude women from participating in DDR processes can be avoided or at least mitigated. The international community has generally moved away from requiring individuals to present a weapon as proof of their combatant status[71] to participate in DDR programmes.[72] Still, women may think they need to prove their combatant status to be allowed to participate.[73] This narrative has also been exploited by men who are married to female combatants. For example, a female combatant in Sierra Leone said that her bush husband told her that if she registered for disarmament "they" would take her picture and she would be sent to court.[74] The female ex-combatant gave her weapon to her husband and explained, "I had to do it because he gave it to me.…But I was not afraid to disarm. I should have disarmed [if] I should have got a gun."

In addition to representing diverse women's voices in planning for DDR, it is beneficial to identify barriers to women's entry at the earliest stage of the process. For example, in Nepal, female ex-combatant participation in the DDR process was seen at the highest rate (38 per cent) of all UN-led programmes. One researcher credits this success to practitioners' recognition of the barriers to women's participation, including lack of support for pregnant or breastfeeding women, and adapting the programme accordingly.[75]

Other logistical challenges blocking women's participation in DDR programmes include the distance from the site of the programme to women's communities, the lack of transportation or funds to reach the site, lack of childcare options and the need to balance immediate economic needs with DDR participation. In the aftermath of war, women will have other demands on their time, such as caring for family members and other dependants.[76]

During the demobilization phase of DDR, women often face specific challenges. Cantonment sites can be places of particular insecurity for women. Analysis of the demobilization phase in Liberia noted benefits to women and girls when they were separated from men, especially former commanders.[77] Guidance in the IDDRS gender module notes that while men and women should have separate facilities, there should also be a family facility where families can stay together.[78] Another best practice at the cantonment sites in Liberia was the establishment of "interim care centres", which offered reproductive health support and trauma counselling to boys and girls who had taken part in the conflict.[79] A related recommendation is to ensure women fieldworkers are available to conduct interviews if women combatants feel more comfortable speaking to women.[80]

[67] Thomas, "Gendered Security Sector Reform."[68] United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR".
[69] Ibid.
[70] Orly Maya Stern and Catherine Peterson, "Assisting Women Formerly Associated with Al-Shabaab," n.d., p. 49.
[71] Referred to using phrases such as "one man, one gun" and "no weapon, no entry" in DDR literature.
[72] United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR".
[73] Henshaw, "Female Combatants in Postconflict Processes"; United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR".
[74] Chris Coulter, Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers: Women's Lives through War and Peace in Sierra Leone (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 154.
[75] Steenbergen, "Female Ex-combatants, Peace, and Reintegration".
[76] Mazurana, Krystalli and Baaré, "Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration".
[77] Hills, "Gender and Demilitarization in Liberia".
[78] United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR".
[79] Hills, "Gender and Demilitarization in Liberia".
[80] Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful DDR Processes", p. 32.

A key concern for many men, women, boys and girls who participate in DDR processes is stigma. Stigma is often gendered. Boys and men can in certain instances face less stigma than women and girls for their roles in armed groups because of stereotypes that see men as warriors and violence as masculine. In contrast, women who participate in violence are often viewed as transgressive, and their participation in armed groups is frequently sexualized. One source notes that, for girls in DDR, stigma is "longer, more severe, and more difficult" than for boys because of the assumption that girls had sex with men and therefore are seen as less marriageable.[81]

Interestingly, a Lake Chad Basin study demonstrates that stigma varies based on the gender of the community member. The researchers found that women were more fearful of women returning from Boko Haram, while men were more focused on the difficulties of reintegrating men from Boko Haram.[82] The study also draws attention to a counterintuitive reality: in some ways, women who disengage from Boko Haram benefit from an informal clemency from the population that men do not receive. However, it notes that, despite this clemency, women suffered from severe social stigma and marginalization. Community members in the Lake Chad Basin noted that they thought women would be more stigmatized than men because they would be rejected by other women and be unable to marry.[83] Evidence from Sierra Leone illustrated that women faced a more difficult and longer reintegration process because they faced higher levels of stigma and had fewer ways to support themselves.[84] Because of the fear of stigma from participating in a DDR programme and identifying themselves as being linked to an armed group, many women and girls choose not to participate in programmes and instead reintegrate on their own.[85] Women and girls' tendency to avoid formal DDR programmes makes it harder to track their reintegration success and can lead to false conclusions about reintegration.[86] Finally, another factor that can prevent participation in DDR is that girls and young women are often among the last to be released from fighting forces, if they are released at all.[87] This pattern was particularly prevalent in the case of the LRA in Uganda. It would be useful to conduct additional research that tracks the timing of the release of women and girls across rebel groups in various regions.[88]

Women who have been sexually abused while in an armed group may be subject to an especially harsh reception from their communities. The Lake Chad Basin study noted the additional stigma women who had been victims of sexual violence from Boko Haram would likely face. Children conceived from rape or while the mother was associated with Boko Haram may be discriminated against or rejected.[89]

Mothers of these children are sometimes forced to choose between their children and other members of their families. Finally, for men disengaging from some armed groups, the suspicion that they perpetrated sexual violence while with the group can also negatively impact their reintegration.

Extra burdens might be placed on women as part of the reintegration process – in particular, related to the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. Since women are the primary caregivers in many contexts, they become responsible for the reintegration of these children. For this reason, there may be a need to provide support and specialized training on how to understand and cope with traumatized children.[90]

Finally, even when reintegration processes deliberately attempt to include women, women are often expected to represent a certain narrative and speak only about certain topics. In Colombia, for example, female ex-combatants were often included in dialogues or processes, but "their participation [was] limited to an expectation that they narrate gendered harms".[91]

Consequences of Exclusion

When women are excluded from DDR processes, they are removed from the political sphere. This pattern was observed in cases where women were reintegrating from armed groups (outside of a formal DDR processes), as occurred with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. Women leaving the LTTE described the end of the war and their return to civilian life as an "infantilizing experience", and were frustrated that they could not employ the skills they gained in wartime in their civilian lives.[92] Research shows that women have often been denied the opportunity to participate in DDR because they have immediately been labelled as victims and steered towards services for victims.[93] This is despite the fact that cross-national data has shown that the majority of women in armed groups had their own motivations for joining the groups and were not forcibly recruited.[94]

Women, like men, can be victims and perpetrators of violence, and the rationale for making demobilizing combatants choose between services for victims and services for those seeking reintegration is unclear.[95] By immediately classifying women as victims and preventing them from participating in DDR, practitioners are denying women agency. This assumption is addressed in the UN's A4P framework, which advocates for "shifting the protection of women as solely victims of armed conflict or subject of protection by the security forces, to recognizing them as decision makers, security officers, and changemakers in SSR and DDR".[96]

While women are often left out of DDR, DDR processes unintentionally rely on the unpaid labour of women in their communities to care for the disabled, young, sick or traumatized ex-combatants. Instead, DDR can engage meaningfully with women in communities, including through financial contributions, as partners, stakeholders, and resources in DDR design and delivery.[97]

DDR rarely prioritizes the reintegration phase, which harms prospects for lasting security. In Sierra Leone, women faced a more difficult and longer reintegration process than men, experienced higher levels of stigma and had fewer ways to support themselves.[98] The need to prioritize reintegration emerged as a key theme in both gender-focused and non-gender-focused DDR literature, but deprioritizing reintegration and long-term programming particularly harms women who have been associated with fighting forces.

Finally, while the exclusion of women from DDR processes hurts individual women, it also harms societies recovering from violent conflict. By failing to take seriously women's roles as key political actors, the international community is not allowing women to participate in the rebuilding of their societies.

[81] USAID and others, "Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: Lessons Learnt and Good Practices on Prevention of Recruitment and Use, Release and Reintegration", Technical Note, December 2020.

[82] IOM, "Gendered Dimensions of DDRR in the Lake Chad Basin Region".

[83] Ibid., p. 19.

[84] MacKenzie, "Gender and Post-Conflict Security", p. 498.

[85] Mary Beth Altier, "Violent Extremist Disengagement and Reintegration: Lessons from Over 30 Years of DDR", RESOLVE Network, March 22, 2021; USAID and others, "Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups".

[86] See Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration," Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 51, No. 4 (August 2007). They conclude that women did not face specific challenges in reintegration, but in a footnote explain that their research only relates to women who formally participated in DDR programs.

[87] Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana, Where Are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War (Quebec, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 2004), p. 119.

[88] IRIN News, "Frustration over LRA's Refusal to Free Women and Children", The New Humanitarian, May 9, 2007.

[89] IOM, "Gendered Dimensions of DDRR in the Lake Chad Basin Region", p. 10.

[90] Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful DDR Processes", p. 33.

[91] Krystalli, "Engage with Combatants", p. 161.

[92] Rebekka Friedman, "Remnants of a Checkered Past: Female LTTE and Social Reintegration in Post-War Sri Lanka", International Studies Quarterly, vol. 62, No. 3 (September 1, 2018).

[93] Henshaw, "Female Combatants in Postconflict Processes".

[94] Alexis Leanna Henshaw, "Where Women Rebel: Patterns of Women's Participation in Armed Rebel Groups 1990–2008", International Feminist Journal of Politics, vol. 18, No. 1 (January 2, 2016).

[95] Henshaw, "Female Combatants in Postconflict Processes", p. 68.

[96] Gender Unit, DPO, "Women Transforming Peace in Peacekeeping Contexts", October 2020, p. 18.

[97] Radhika Coomaraswamy, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN Women, 2015), p. 179.

[98] MacKenzie, "Gender and Post-Conflict Security".

Masculinity in DDR Processes

IN MANY WAYS DDR PRIORITIZES men and boys because they are seen as the key actors in perpetrating violence. For example, in the Lake Chad Basin, the majority of respondents in a study saw the reintegration of men as a higher priority than that of women. As summarized in the researchers' report, "reintegration of men is perceived by communities as a preventive solution to violence in areas under Boko Haram influence.… [R]espondents explain that if men leave Boko Haram, the group would cease to exist".[99] Perceptions about men being the key to ceasing and preventing violence are the reason men have been prioritized in DDR activities. Despite this, there has been little examination of men's gendered identities.

The literature on masculinities examines the ways in which they are used to support or resist violence. One study of masculinity in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone found that "[m]asculinity structures the practices of men.…Although masculinity is normalized as the natural state of affairs for men, individuals still must work to obtain their masculine status."[100] One specific type of masculinity, "protest masculinity", has been used to explain the types of violence perpetrated by the RUF in Sierra Leone. Protest masculinity involves exaggerated masculine practices, particularly by young men who are not able to attain the full status of the most powerful or idealized masculinity (hegemonic masculinity).[101]

According to research from Uganda, masculinity influences not only men's sense of themselves, but their relationships with other men, as well as with the state more generally. This same research also highlights a potential link between violence and frustrated expectations around manhood, what has been called "thwarted masculinity".[102]

Recently, there have been discussions about the need for DDR to address violent masculinities.[103] There is a focus on "militarized masculinities", or the "fusion of certain practices and images of maleness with the use of weapons, the exercise of violence, and the performance of an aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity".[104] Historically, associating maleness with the use of weapons has been a key tool militarized groups employ to recruit men and persuade them to use violence.[105]

Focusing on masculinities pushes against the simplistic understanding of gender-responsive DDR. Addressing the needs and experiences of women and girls is essential, yet a DDR process that only sees gender as being about paying attention to women and girls is not gender responsive and misses key benefits of incorporating gender into the process.[106] Programmes that tout their gender sensitivity are sometimes basing DDR programming on gender stereotypes, as opposed to gender analyses grounded in context.[107] A basic principle of a gender analysis is that ideas about one gender are influenced and reliant on ideas about another gender – for example, the ways masculinity is contrasted with femininity. Additionally, a gender analysis is a power analysis, and by ignoring men, boys and masculinities, the analyses are missing key insights into how power operates in the transition phase from conflict.[108]

[99] IOM, "Gendered Dimensions of DDRR in the Lake Chad Basin Region".
[100] David Duriesmith, "Is Manhood a Causal Factor in the Shifting Nature of War? The Case of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front", International Feminist Journal of Politics, vol. 16, No. 2 (April 3, 2014).
[101] Duriesmith, "Is Manhood a Causal Factor?", pp. 242–43.
[102] Dolan, Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States", p. 68.
[103] Coomaraswamy, Preventing Conflict; Altier, "Violent Extremist Disengagement and Reintegration"; Mazurana, Krystalli and Baaré, "Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration"; UNDP, "Blame It on the War?" [104] Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities".
[104] Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities", p. 5.
[105] Goldstein, War and Gender.
[106] Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities".
[107] Henri Myrttinen, Gender and Security Toolkit: Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2019, p. 8.
[108] Phoebe Donnelly, "Demystifying Gender Analysis for Research on Violent Extremism", RESOLVE Network, January 21, 2021.

Even for DDR practitioners and policymakers who want to incorporate masculinity into their policies and programmes, there is still a lack of guidance on how to do so. Discussions around masculinity and DDR frequently come from an academic and theoretical perspective, making it hard to figure out how to incorporate masculinity into DDR processes.

The Risk of Stereotypes and Reinforcement of Militarized Masculinity

An entry point into the topic of DDR and masculinities is to make DDR practitioners aware of how DDR processes can reinforce militarized masculinity.[109] The focus on combatants, especially combatants with arms, can privilege a certain form of militarized masculinity. While men often constitute the majority of combatants, they also fill support roles in armed groups. In interviews with ex-combatants from the Lord's Resistance Army, many male participants described roles outside of combat or fighting, such as being a babysitter to children born into the LRA or cooking.[110] One male ex-combatant noted that he was in the group for two years before being taught to fight. Men in Boko Haram–controlled areas also occupy a variety of roles, including non-fighting supporters, traders and providers of key services, and/or they are linked to Boko Haram through kinship or marriage.[111] These examples demonstrate that people's gender is not an accurate shorthand for their involvement in combat or embeddedness in the group's architecture.

An article focused on reintegration programmes in Colombia notes that, in mainstreaming gender in DDR programmes, those leading and designing the programmes must be aware of stereotypes they might unintentionally be perpetuating about men, women, masculinity and femininity. For example, one DDR practitioner said that the female ex-combatants in Colombia were more difficult because they were "emotionally needy, disruptive, sexually promiscuous, and prone to fighting".[112] The article explains that women ex-combatants may have different problems than men ex-combatants, but because men are the model of normalcy others are measured against, women's problems can be seen as abnormal.

The IDDRS gender module specifically discusses masculinity in the disarmament phase and cautions against media images that support violent masculinity. Instead, DDR processes can provide incentives that can replace the power and prestige of owning a weapon, especially by including communities in the weapons-collection process.[113]

While men are the predominant owners and users of small arms, they are also injured by guns in far larger numbers than women.[114] Additionally, other research notes that sexual violence against men and boys in conflict settings is at times "widespread".[115] This pattern of violence and victimization illustrates the problem with labelling any individual a combatant or a victim. Since men are victims of violence, there is an opportunity in DDR processes for men to "become critical agents of change to end these multiple forms of violence".[116] Leveraging partnerships with men will require DDR practitioners to move from seeing men and boys only as a security threat and instead recognize the ways in which they are victims of conflict and would benefit from an end to cycles of violence.

Gender-responsive DDR focuses on masculinities and femininities. While the UN-led DDR programme in Nepal was successful in terms of attracting female excombatants, it failed to consider men's unique needs in the DDR process. Specifically, there was little consideration given to the gendered needs of male ex-combatants, particularly men in intercaste marriages or who were single parents.[117]

[109] Altier, "Violent Extremist Disengagement and Reintegration", p. 51.
[110] Phoebe Donnelly, "The Interactive Relationship between Gender and Strategy", Global Society, June 27, 2018.
[111] International Crisis Group, "An Exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor," Crisis Group Africa Briefing 170, March 19, 2021, p. 6.
[112] Theidon, "Reconstructing Masculinities", p. 29.
[113] United Nations, "IDDRS 5.10: Women, Gender and DDR".
[114] Ibid.
[115] Wenche Iren Hauge, "Gender Dimensions of DDR – Beyond Victimization and Dehumanization: Tracking the Thematic", International Feminist Journal of Politics, vol. 22, No. 2 (2020), p. 214.
[116] Joseph Vess and others, "The Other Side of Gender: Men as Critical Agents of Change", Special Report 340, United States Institute of Peace , December 2013.
[117] Steenbergen, "Female Ex-Combatants, Peace, and Reintegration", p. 9.
[118] Omer Aijazi and Erin Baines, "Relationality, Culpability and Consent in Wartime: Men's Experiences of Forced Marriage", International Journal of Transitional Justice, September 5, 2017.

Another problem with immediately labelling male ex-combatants as perpetrators and women ex-combatants as victims is that this logic fails to recognize alternative masculinities in armed groups. For example, in the LRA men would have children with their forced wives, and several spoke about their roles as fathers and how that changed their approach to fighting.[118] Some interviewed participants spoke about how having children made them less inclined to use violence; for some male combatants, fatherhood and was a motivation to leave the Lord's Resistance Army. [119]

A contextual analysis can reveal what men and boys gained in an armed group and how that power or those privileges influenced their journey into manhood or fulfilling masculine ideals. Reconfiguring wartime masculinity may mean satisfying several needs met by an armed group.[120] For example, a study on men's reintegration in Uganda noted that livelihood activities were important for raising men's community esteem and lowering their social marginalization, thereby reducing "the appeal of armed groups as a source of respect and upward mobility".[121]

Related to the role of alternative masculinities, DDR practitioners must recognize that men will be reintegrating into a new socioeconomic reality, both in terms of the new roles men and women have taken on during conflict as well as the altered socioeconomic environment. A report on men and peacebuilding notes that men and boys may not be able to get jobs in post-conflict settings, which can lead to loss of identity, emotional distress, substance abuse and violent behaviour. [122] DDR practitioners can potentially avoid some of these maladaptive patterns by considering alternative paths to manhood and to building the confidence that men will be looking for after they leave DDR processes.

PROGRAMMES THAT TARGET MEN, BOYS AND MASCULINITY

A report published by the United States Institute of Peace provides examples of programmes that respond to militarized masculinities. Learning from such programmes can inform the continued integration of gender in DDR.

Programmes featured in the report include:

- The Refugee Law Project in Uganda, an organization that focuses on male survivors of sexual violence.
- Programmes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo that focus on therapeutic spaces for men to discuss norm changes aimed at preventing sexual- and gender-based violence.
- Programmes that centre on unlearning violence, developing nonviolent behaviours, and changing community norms. Specifically, one programme promotes men's roles as equitable and nonviolent fathers and caregivers.
- Initiatives in Rwanda that show how engaging men to support and partner with women's economic empowerment initiatives improved economic outcomes for women, supported men's income generation needs and provided opportunities to improve relationships between couples.[122]

[119] Ibid., p. 17.
[120] Mazurana, Krystalli and Baaré, "Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration".
[121] Blattman and Annan, "Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion?", p. 16.

DDR-related Tools through a Gender Framework

AS DDR HAS EVOLVED, DDR-related tools have been used across different contexts, either in conjunction with, or outside of, formal DDR programmes. The DDR-related tools most commonly discussed through a gender framework are community violence reduction (CVR) and weapons and ammunition management (WAM). However, even within these topic areas, there is little data on specific methods to integrate gender into the projects and assess the impact of doing so.

Community Violence Reduction

Community violence reduction was first used in Haiti in 2006 in response to MINUSTAH's perception that a DDR programme was not the appropriate strategy to address violence by urban armed groups.[124] CVR differed from other forms of DDR being used at the time because the goal of the programme was to work directly with "at-risk" communities, i.e., the focus was on prevention rather than reintegrating ex-combatants. The UN describes CVR as a "[c]omponent of a UN peace operation, aiming at preventing and reducing violence at the community level in ongoing armed conflict or in post-conflict environments".[125] The CVR projects launched in Haiti included the UN's gender mission representatives.[126] However, the author of this report could not find any data assessing the CVR projects in Haiti, or other contexts, through a gender lens.

More recently, CVR projects have been introduced in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mali. In a review of CVR projects in CAR, the authors note that CVR can be linked with community-mediated peace deals brokered by community leaders and organizations, including women's organizations.[127] In CAR, CVR projects were focused on income generation opportunities as well as promoting social cohesion and community resilience. While not analysed specifically in the CAR case, it feels impossible to discuss social cohesion without considering gendered relationships.

In the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali (MINUSMA), the DDR section is in charge of CVR work and has targeted "youth at risk." One programme in Mopti targeted 200 young people, connecting them with 100 Islamic teachers.[128] A report discussing this programme does not mention the gender of the young people, although the "youth at risk" description usually attaches to young men. The ways in which terms like "youth" or "young people" conceal gender identity highlight the need to specify not only participants' ages but their gender as well.

The IDDRS guidance on CVR stipulates that CVR programmes can include gender-transformative projects. Specifically, the IDDRS guidance explains that CVR projects can "challenge harmful notions of masculinity and engage with men and boys to promote behaviours that value gender equality and non-violence".[129] However, there is little evidence on how to effectively integrate masculinity into a CVR project.

The IDDRS guide and findings from CAR highlight the need to make sure CVR projects and beneficiaries of CVR are diverse and representative of the community and that gender is an integrated part of any project. Specifically, the IDDRS provide specific quotas for inclusion of women in leading CVR projects and as beneficiaries of such projects.

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[122] Vess and others, "The Other Side of Gender".

[123] Henny Slegh and others, "'I Can Do Women's Work': Reflections on Engaging Men as Allies in Women's Economic Empowerment in Rwanda", Gender & Development, vol. 21, No. 1 (March 2013).

[124] Carla King and others, "'MINUSTAH Is Doing Positive Things Just as They Do Negative Things': Nuanced Perceptions of a UN Peacekeeping Operation Amidst Peacekeeper-Perpetrated Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Haiti", Conflict, Security & Development, vol. 21, No. 6 (2020).

[125] United Nations, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration", n.d. (accessed on October 7, 2022). Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration.

[126] King and others, "'MINUSTAH Is Doing Positive Things'".

[127] Robert Muggah and Jean de Dieu Ntanga Ntita, "Reducing Community Violence in the Central African Republic – the Case of Bria", Small Wars Journal, August 16, 2018.[128] DDR Section, "Gender-Responsive DDR".

[128] Namie Di Razza, "Protecting Civilians in the Context of Violent Extremism: The Dilemmas of UN Peacekeeping in Mali," International Peace Institute, October 2018.

[129] United Nations, "IDDRS 2.30: Community Violence Reduction", p. 6.

Weapons and Ammunition Management

Gender has been mainstreamed into discussions of weapons and ammunition management (WAM) at the policy level through two pathways. According to the UN's guidance, gender should be integrated into WAM by considering the impacts on women, men, girls and boys "at every phase of the lifecycle management of weapons and ammunition processes".[130] In particular, the impact of weapons on sexual and gender-based violence is raised in the IDDRS module on weapons and ammunition management.[131] The second approach to including gender in WAM that the UN advocates is to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of WAM policies and practices.[132]

The inclusion of women in WAM has received some attention and research, especially within policy organizations. The UN Institute of Disarmament Research examined women's engagement in WAM. The resulting study noted the dearth of gender-disaggregated data on national militaries or police forces with specific information on who is engaging in WAM. However, the study found some support for the assumption that women are underrepresented in WAM, in line with patterns of keeping women away from roles where weapons are handled and managed.[133]

The UN Department of Peace Operations analysis of WAM states that "gender-sensitive arms control operations are proven to be more effective in addressing the impact of the illicit circulation and misuse of weapons".[134] However, the report does not cite any data or other evidence to support this claim. While men are primarily seen as more likely to engage in the illicit circulation and misuse of weapons, women have historically been involved in weapons smuggling across various contexts.[135] The UN guidance on WAM does note the link between masculinities and weapons ownership, and suggests crafting outreach and communication for young men that focuses on "disassociating arms ownership from notions of power, protection, status and masculinity".[136]

Women have been seen as a key asset to WAM. According to a 2003 study on gender and DDR, in certain African countries a woman has the power to stop a man from taking his gun outside the house if she is economically empowered to provide food for their family.[137] One DDR expert quoted explained that women need to be empowered so they can disarm men. While women can be an asset in WAM, more recent thinking on DDR moves past supporting women only so they can disarm men and instead sees them as actors in their own right.

THE 2016 PEACE AGREEMENT IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, women participated in the peace process and helped set the stage for an inclusive DDR process.[138] The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian Government and FARC-EP contains over 100 provisions on gender, and the agreement has been heralded as leading to "one of the most successful weapon laydowns in history".[139]

However, although the 2016 peace agreement includes gender provisions, researchers have noted that only few of these were later implemented and there were no clear mechanisms for post-demobilisation participation for women developed.[140] Hence, despite attention to women during the peace process in Colombia, the peace agreement has been unable to transform gender roles In addition, the reintegra-tion of women excombatants in Colombia has tended to pressure women to conform to traditional gender roles.[41] The Colombian example is just one illustration of the ways in which most peace agreements seek to return society to a "normality" that is "unequivocally patriarchal", as cases from Palestine, Nepal and Sri Lanka also illustrate.[142]

[130] Tessières, Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management, p. 17.

[131] United Nations, "IDDRS 4.11: Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management", UN DDR Resource Centre, June 16, 2020.

[132] Tessières, Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management.[134] DDR Section, "Gender-Responsive DDR".

[133] Hana Salama and Emma Bjertén-Günther, "Women Managing Weapons: Perspectives for Increasing Women's Participation in Weapons and Ammunition Management", Geneva, Switzerland, UN Institute of Disarmament Research, 2021, p. 16.

[134] DDR Section, "Gender-Responsive DDR"

[135] See, e.g., Elaine Cary, Women Drug Traffickers: Mules, Bosses and Organized Crime (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2014).

[136] Tessières, Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management, p. 78.

[137] Farr, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective to Successful DDR Processes", p. 33.

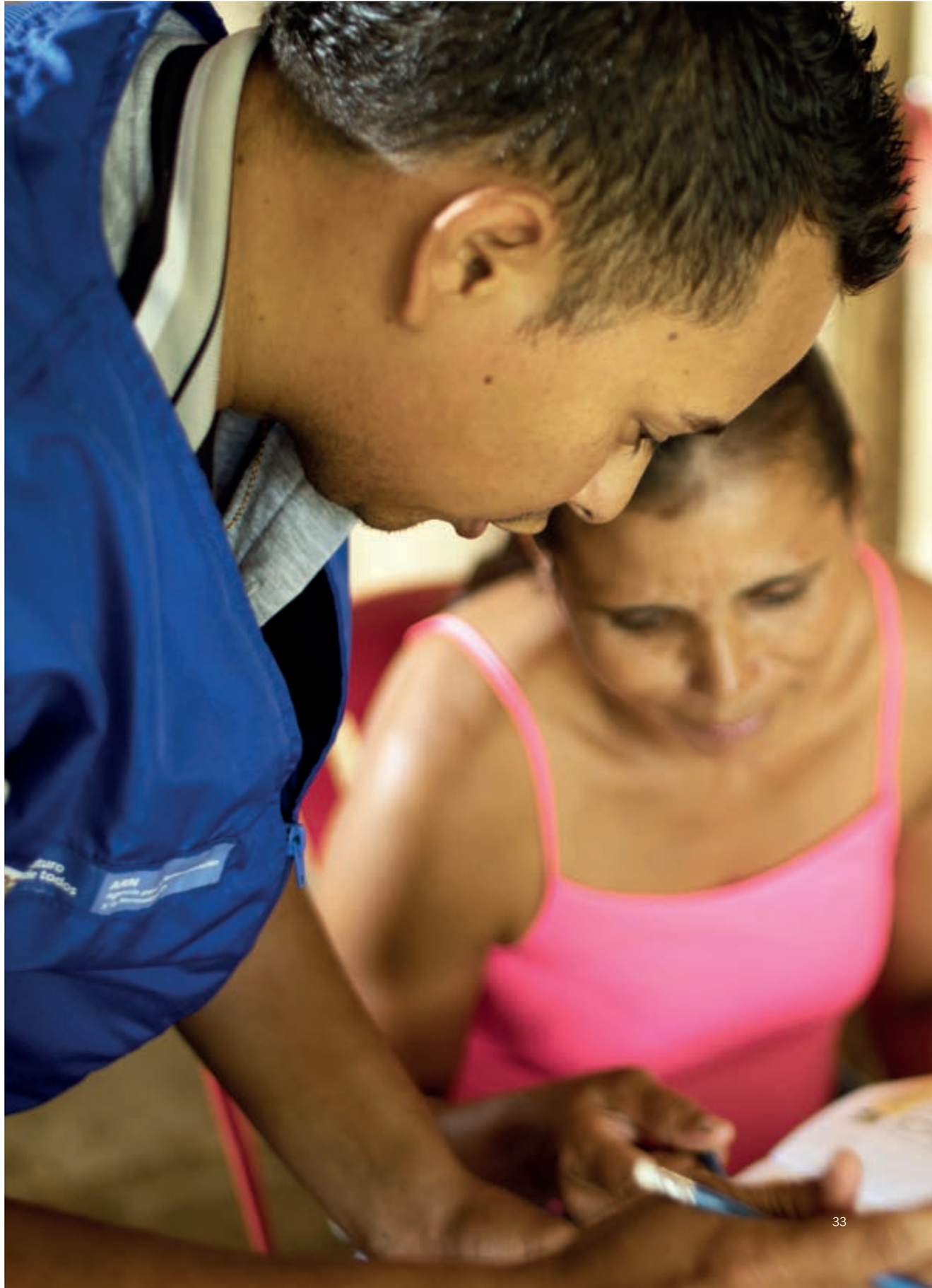
[138] "Gender-Responsive DDR: Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda," 19.

[139] Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, "Delivering on Colombia's Peace Agreement: Women Call for Action", Issue 226, July 24, 2019.

[140] José A Gutiérrez and Emma Murphy, "The Unspoken Red-Line in Colombia: Gender Reordering of Women Ex-Combatants and the Transformative Peace Agenda", Cooperation and Conflict, May 30, 2022, p. 2.

[141] Ibid., p. 6.

[142] Ibid., p. 12.



DDR-related Activities in New Conflict Contexts

THE IDDRS HIGHLIGHT THAT "exits from armed groups and the reintegration of adult ex-combatants can and should be supported at all times, even in the absence of a DDR programme".[143] Today, defector or exit programmes, although not- officially labelled as DDR processes, have emerged as important tools in contexts where AGDTO operate. In these contexts, questions often arise around the relationship between DDR and judicial frameworks and counter-terrorism activities (often labelled PRR). According to interviews with experts working in the DDR and counter-terrorism space PRR and its relationship to DDR are not yet well understood.[144] A key difference is the focus on accountability in PRR. The accountability framework in PRR is based on guidance in Security Council resolution 1373, requiring Member States to bring to justice perpetrators of terrorist acts.[145] While the risk of securitizing aspects of the DDR process through PRR frameworks has been identified, there are also important gendered aspects of PRR that are less well understood.[146]

In Somalia, experiences from the screening process for defectors from al-Shabaab has highlighted several gender implications. The process categorizes individuals as "high risk" or "low risk" but what these terms mean and risk to whom are not clearly articulated and vary across contexts. Women are usually classified as "low risk" by default, regardless of their role in the group. They therefore avoid detention and do not gain attention from state authorities.[147]
The criminal justice systems treat men, wom-en, boys and girls differently. For example, in addi-tion to being indicted under national criminal codes, counter-terrorism laws and anti-terrorism financing laws, women have been charged with crimes related to endangering their children and illegally entering a country.[148]

Finally, in spite of often being categorised as "low risk", women, are often punished in their own communities and are seen as transgressing societal norms and expectations – in effect, they are doubly "punished" for engaging with AGDTOs.[149] Hence, despite rarely facing legal or criminal penalization, they are ostracized by both national authorities and by their communities/society for perceived affiliation with terrorists. Some experts predict that in the future women will become more frequent targets of judicial processes.[150]

There are also questions regarding how to best integrate gender into the risk assessment frameworks used in settings where AGDTOs operate. The existing instruments are often labelled "gender neutral". However, when it comes to policy documents, the term "gender neutral" usually means that a programme was designed for men. This practice ignores emerging findings that suggest that many of the risk factors tend to differ according to gender."[151]

Inserting women into a prosecutorial and securitized frameworks, without re-evaluating those gendered frameworks, can cause gendered harms[152] But basing these on preconceived gender stereotypes is equally problematic and will not lead to a gender-sensitive approach. Additionally, making assumptions about women's roles without asking questions and learning about their experiences deprives women of agency.

Explicitly discussing the ways in which women should be incorporated into the screening process creates the opportunity for criminal justice processes to be gender-responsive. UN guidance on gender-sensitive prosecution processes for women highlights the need to recognize women's (especially young women's) unique needs in detention, interrogation and witness protection programmes. There is particular concern around avoiding secondary victimization and re-traumatization of women who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence.[153] Focusing on the complexity of women's roles and experiences, instead of automatically categorizing them as victims, can actually enhance a victim-centric approach to their rehabilitation.

Complexity of Roles for All Ages and Genders
One challenge in considering how to treat men, women, boys and girls in contexts where AGDTOs are operating is that the roles individuals play in the group are often very diverse (and many are not related to violence). In addition, the pathways individuals take to fulfil these roles are a complex mix of voluntariness, coercion and extreme pressure.

AGDTOs like al-Shabaab or ISIS often gain and sustain power through a diverse set of engagement with the communities they govern.[154] For this reason, a nuanced understanding of women's engagement with al-Shabaab do not easily map onto categorizations such as "high risk" versus "low risk" or combatant status.

UN guidance on screening recommends that there be "individual assessment and screening to appropriately assess each case and determine each person's affiliation and/or victimhood".[155] The UN guidance is mostly focused on the experiences of "women and children", highlighting the ways in which both groups can be victimized. Gender studies scholars push against equating women and children ("womenandchildren"), as doing so takes away women's agency as independent political actors and promotes the idea that they are in need of protection in the same way children are.[156] Given the diversity of women's and girls' experiences in armed groups, DDR activities should carefully assess an individual returnee's motivations for joining and role in the AGDTOs, the threat they may pose, and various options for reintegration."[157]

Operation Safe Corridor, a defectors programme (usually regarded as a PRR programme) started in Nigeria in 2016. In its early years, it struggled to ensure the rights and safety of programme participants. Many participants in the programme reported problematic conditions within the detention centres where many were held before officially entering the programme, voluntary defectors were held in government facilities for years without the ability to contact family members and some individuals died in confinement.[158] There were allegations that women who participated in Operation Safe Corridor were pressured to engage in sexual acts with programme leadership.[159] Since these allegations became public, Operation Safe Corridor has set up dedicated programmes for women.

Boys also face unique challenges in their engagement with DDR-related programming and criminal justice systems. They are often treated differently within security and criminal justice systems based on their age and gender. For example, the vulnerabilities for boys and young adolescents detained in al-Hol and Roj camps in northeast Syria have been noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.[160] Boys and young adolescents in these camps are separated from their mothers and sisters and held in detention facilities, a practice

[143] United Nations, "IDDRS 2.10: The UN Approach to DDR".
[144] Sarfati and Donnelly, "Protection Dilemmas".
[145] S/RES/1373.
[146] For the ways in which counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism programs can harm women, girls and families, see Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Human Rights Impact of Counter-Terrorism and Countering (Violent) Extremism Policies and Practices on the Rights of Women, Girls and the Family", Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, Human Rights Council, 46th Session, January 22, 2021.
[147] Ibid., p. 44.
[148] International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Rehabilitation and Reintegration from Violent Extremism (UNDP, 2019), p. 40.
[149] Ibid., p. 45.
[150] Ibid., p. 47.
[151] Joanne Richards, "High Risk or Low Risk: Screening for Violent Extremists in DDR Programmes", International Peacekeeping, vol. 25, No. 3 (May 27, 2018), p. 388.
[152] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Human Rights Impact".
[153] United Nations, "Key Principles for the Protection, Repatriation, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women and Children with Links to United Nations Listed Terrorist Groups," April 2019, p. 7.
[154] See Donnelly, "Wedded to Warfare", for an explanation of the concept of "external cohesion".
[155] United Nations, "Key Principles", p. 5.
[156] R. Charli Carpenter, "'Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups': Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue", International Studies Quarterly, vol. 49, No. 2 (June 1, 2005).
[157] ICAN and UNDP, Invisible Women, p. 40.
[158] International Crisis Group, "An Exit from Boko Haram?", p. 2.
[159] Ibid., p. 10.
[160] Ní Aoláin, "Gendering the Boy Child in the Context of Counterterrorism".

inconsistent with the rights of any child. One of these detention centres is characterized as a "rehabilitation" camp. According to the Special Rapporteur, there is no adequate legal basis to justify the detention of any of the children held in the centres. Boy children are not seen as victims in the same way girl children are and are instead viewed as a potential security risk.

Another study on assisting women formerly associated with al-Shabaab in Somalia, makes clear that not all women formerly associated with al-Shabaab "are the same, have the same needs, the same risk profile, or suffer the same risks".[161] Because of this, it is suggested that DDR practitioners should ensure a "minimum basket" of services for all women in their location in Somalia but specify other services based on women's needs in different locations.

Complications in Reintegration

In contexts of ongoing conflicts, including where AGDTOs are operating, individuals reintegrating into society can face unique challenges that often play out along gendered lines. An expert on Somalia's defectors programme noted the obstacles in following up with programme participants in a country where international actors' ability to travel outside urban areas is limited. In addition, while women tend to receive more lenient treatment in criminal justice systems compared to men, they also tend to receive less rehabilitation and reintegration support.[162]

Monitoring the reintegration of women who have been associated with AGDTOs is particularly challenging, given that many of them do not participate in formal programmes. In the Somalia defectors programme, defining what it means for women to "leave the group" is difficult, given that many women involved in al-Shabaab are not fighters in the traditional sense and are supporting al-Shabaab from their homes.[163]

It then becomes unclear what it means for women to defect when they did not necessarily join al-Shabaab by living with the group. For example, a woman might be married to an al-Shabaab fighter and provide her support to the armed group through her husband or work part-time fundraising for al-Shabaab from her home. These complications are likely to be applicable across many similar conflict contexts.

A related issue concerns women who have crossed international borders in their engagement with armed groups and face challenges in returning to their communities of origin. There is a large disparity in the percentage of women foreign terrorist fighters who returned from Iraq and Syria compared to the percentage of men who returned.[164] Several factors could explain this phenomenon, including for example that female affiliates of ISIS surrendered their passports once they arrive in the conflict zone; prohibitions against women traveling without a male guardian; the large fees human traffickers require women to pay to leave ISIS zones; and some countries' prioritizing the return of children while preferring adult citizens to be prosecuted in the region where they fought.

Women with children face additional challenges in trying to reintegrate back into communities, especially given the transnational nature of many conflicts today. Based on laws related to the country of origin, some countries make it challenging for children to establish citizenship if they were born outside the country.[165] If mothers are unable to gain citizenship for their children in their communities of origin, they are unlikely to return. There are also examples of countries that have tried to strip the citizenship of dual or naturalized citizens who are perceived to be associated with AGDTOs.[166] The peculiar challenges of children born into armed groups, especially as a result of sexual violence, remain underexplored and have implications for the future of conflict-affected societies.[167]

[161] Stern and Peterson, "Assisting Women Formerly Associated with Al-Shabaab".
[162] United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), "Gender Dimensions of the Response to Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives," CTED Trends Report, February 2019.
[163] Orly Maya Stern, "The Invisible Women of Al-Shabaab", Rehabilitation Support Team, Adam Smith International, September 2019, p. 29.
[164] CTED, "Gender Dimensions".
[165] ICAN and UNDP, Invisible Women, p. 41.
[166] Ashitha Nagesh, "Explainers: Nationality and Borders Bill: Can You Lose Your Citizenship?", BBC News (accessed October 12, 2022). Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53428191.
[167] Kimberly Theidon and Dyan Mazurana, eds., Challenging Conceptions: Children Born of Wartime Rape and Sexual Exploitation (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021).

Conclusions

DDR HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED as a crucial component of peacebuilding. As the concept of DDR has evolved, so has the normative framework around incorporating a gender perspective in peace and security, and there is today an emerging consensus about the need to strengthen the integration of gender into DDR. But further guidance is required on how to do so in practice Through a review of DDR-related policy and research, this report demonstrates that gender-responsive DDR requires a thorough examination of power dynamics and gendered roles and norms.

This report concludes that there is still a significant knowledge deficit regarding both how to effectively integrate a gender perspective into DDR processes and the long-term impact of this integration on DDR's greater objectives. Partly because of this deficit, there is a tendency in the DDR community to equate gender mainstreaming with simply adding women. But the reality is often more complex. For example, some women in armed groups gain access to a form of power and political capital that they did not have prior to the war. If the DDR process does not recognise this reality and only view women as victims, not as decision makers, women are likely to feel "depoliticized" and deprived of their agency. It is therefore important to recognise that both men and women have inflicted or supported as well as experienced various forms of violence.

Recognizing the complexity of gender roles in armed groups has become even more complicated following the increasing number of armed groups designated as terrorist organizations. Additional guidance is required on how to support reintegration of both men and women in such contexts. A DDR response that fails to include a gender perspective risks reproducing harmful gender stereotypes and can contribute to further cycles of violence.

Integrated DDR processes, consisting of DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support during conflict, constitute an opportunity to further strengthen and inform the integration of a gender perspective in DDR. DDR-related tools such as community violence reduction and weapons and ammunition management are instructive in relation to the integration of gender and gender transformative interventions.

Gender-responsive DDR requires contextual gendered analysis. DDR practitioners should use such analysis as a tool to recognize the way power has shifted in society and transformed gendered roles and relationships during the armed conflict. By beginning to compare lessons learned across cases and tools, DDR practitioners and experts can provide a more extensive toolkit for creating gender-responsive DDR.

While we do not yet know whether gender-responsive DDR is more effective than gender-blind DDR in accomplishing the multiple goals of DDR processes, we do know that DDR approaches that take into account the complex power dynamics and roles of men, women, girls, boys, and sexual and gender minorities, better reflect the complex realities on the ground. This report demonstrates some of the ways in which integrated DDR processes can be transformed through a gender analysis. Through case studies from a range of different countries, as well as programmatic examples of incorporating masculinity into DDR tools and best practices for integrating women in DDR, this report provides a starting point for putting gender-responsive DDR into practice.

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