



**Position Paper:  
Linkages between Disarmament, Demobilization  
and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants  
and Security Sector Reform**

October 2003

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# **Linkages between Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Security Sector Reform**

## **I. Introduction and definition**

1. This paper has been prepared pursuant to a request by MDRP partners, made during the Paris meeting of the MDRP Advisory Committee on 29 April 2003, to the MDRP Secretariat to prepare a position paper on the linkages between disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). The paper describes objectives, strategies and challenges of implementation and concludes with a number of suggestions to partners to further develop the role of SSR in DDR processes.

2. Security sector reform (SSR) is defined as improving governance over and service delivery by the security sector. This sector comprises organizations authorized to use force for the protection of the state and its population, as well as civil management and oversight bodies associated with such organizations. This includes military and paramilitary forces, intelligence services, police forces, border and coast guards as well as prison guards and correction officers.

3. While the focus of SSR is on state institutions, armed non-state actors (rebel groups, private militias and security companies) and civil society also need to be taken into account in many countries. The inclusion of the police in the security sector implies an important link to judicial reform and the administration of justice.

## **II. SSR, poverty and development**

4. In many post-conflict countries armed personnel, whether organized or not, often constitutes a threat to stability and a source of insecurity, especially to the poor. A key objective of SSR, therefore, is to turn armed and police personnel into providers of security and political and economic stability through the creation of an accountable, professional and affordable security sector, sized and equipped relative to tasks and available resources, and under democratic control.

5. Strategies for the reduction of poverty, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, may include specific references to the link between (in)security and poverty. Security is one of five key interrelated dimensions of poverty, which are defined in the guidelines for the reduction of poverty adopted by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC). The other four dimensions are economic, political, human, and socio-cultural.

6. Having said that, PRSPs more often than not exclude or ignore the security component, which downgrades the priority it receives and tends to render policies in the other areas much less effective. The security sector is often seen as an unproductive part of Government and its contribution to production and development is often underestimated. However, SSR may represent a relatively modest effort that serves to protect, quite literally, the investments made in other dimensions of poverty.

7. To illustrate this, a number of examples is provided of how conditions of insecurity can affect the fight against poverty:

- ◆ Humanitarian, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development activities may not be possible or only possible in some areas thereby exacerbating social and economic divisions;
- ◆ The potential of previous investments in the country cannot be realized or, at worst, the fruits of such investments may be completely destroyed;
- ◆ The freedom of movement of people and goods can be severely hindered or denied;

- ◆ Investors, small and large, domestic and foreign, are discouraged;
- ◆ The rule of law and respect for human rights are seriously undermined, if not absent;
- ◆ The local population cannot tend to livestock and agriculture, receive education or trade goods;
- ◆ Death and injuries seriously affect communities' ability to carry out subsistence and production activities and place stress on often stretched health services.

### III. SSR strategies

8. To be successful, SSR strategies should be part of a comprehensive political framework that includes political reconciliation, democratization, the rebuilding of state institutions, DDR programs and measures to improve the rule of law. Such a framework should be based on the broadest possible consensus and the “buy-in” of both military and civilian officials.

9. The implementation of SSR strategies should be as transparent as possible, taking into account legitimate national security concerns. The absence of transparency, especially with regard to defense expenditures, may complicate Government's efforts to set up the appropriate macro-economic and fiscal frameworks as well as their negotiations with the IMF, thereby harming long-term economic recovery. Transparency will make it much more difficult to sustain “ghost” soldiers, equipment and maintenance and the siphoning off of resources allocated for them.

10. SSR efforts should take place through a comprehensive and government-owned approach that addresses the four areas described below. The extent of required reform as well as the precise mix of tasks will differ from country to country.

#### Political and legal framework

- ◆ *Institution building and separation of powers*: this includes the establishment of transparent civilian and political management of the security sector that is framed in an appropriate constitutional and legal framework; this aspect may include the overhaul of command structures that reflected the circumstances of previous conflict; the security sector should be fully accountable to elected civilian authorities;
- ◆ Establishment of an *appropriate degree of confidentiality*. It is recognized that national security is a sensitive issue, but this does not exclude public oversight. Checks and balances can be designed that allow the legislature access to sensitive security information without compromising confidentiality. However, this will also require a measure of trust as well as respect by legislators, to be enforced by law, for the confidential nature of some information.

#### Professionalism and conduct

- ◆ An *objective analysis of threats to national security/law and order and of the “troops to tasks” ratio and the establishment/strengthening of a professional planning capacity for that purpose*: this would ensure that the security sector is designed and equipped commensurate to foreseeable tasks, based on an assessment of regional (external threats) and domestic (stability/law and order) factors. Such analysis should be conducted in an open and transparent manner by professional planners and led by the civilian political leadership which should, for its part, consider the costs of the security sector in light of available national resources, threat levels, and its priorities for development;
- ◆ Training of security sector personnel at all levels in *human rights, gender sensitivity and in the functioning of the security sector in a democratic society*. This should include the concept of accountability to society at large, to the democratic leadership, and to the communities they serve;
- ◆ Enhanced *professionalism and discipline*: through expert training, appropriate incentives, and a code of military/police conduct and discipline;
- ◆ Depending on HIV/AIDS infection rates, there may be a need for a dedicated *HIV/AIDS screening and sensitization* component.

#### Public expenditure

- ◆ *Steady financing and transparency in public expenditure:* several recent examples have demonstrated that grievances of unpaid officers and soldiers provide a trigger for problems and may lead to civil war. At the same time, there should be a high level of transparency in public expenditures in the security sector, accompanied by appropriate fiduciary controls and civilian democratic oversight. The security sector should be subject to the same level of scrutiny as the other sectors. In principle, there should be no off-budget spending. Anti-corruption measures may complement SSR in this regard;
- ◆ Setting up of *systems for financial management and procurement*, which are integrated into Government-wide systems.

#### Reconciliation and confidence-building

- ◆ In some cases, the security sector may benefit from a targeted *reconciliation and public information* effort that would seek to establish or restore a more positive image of security forces in the eyes of the public at large. However, legacies left by years of authoritarianism, violence, abuses and corruption may be hard to overcome;
- ◆ *Confidence building in civil/military relations:* SSR may be hampered by perceptions in civilian and military circles that arise from different organizational cultures and lack of knowledge and understanding. Quite possibly, civilians may have fears of security sector personnel or - in case where a civilian government has assumed power after a brutal conflict - security sector personnel could fear retribution from civilians who may have suffered at their hands.

### **IV. Indicators of success**

11. Measurable input oriented indicators of success include the adoption of new legislation and codes of conduct, the introduction of planning procedures and capacities, the publication of defense reviews or strategies (“white papers”) following a thorough consultative process, the number of personnel having received human rights and professional training, opening of well-managed and equipped army barracks and police stations, implementation of reform measures and the adoption of a feasible and transparent budget for the security sector. In cases where security forces had impeded the free flow of goods and people, changes in these flows may be measurable (although this will not necessarily be attributable to security sector reform alone). At the same time, there are important non-tangibles involved, which can be measured through surveys. A key subjective outcome indicator of success is whether citizens perceive a higher level of security and have more trust in police and army than before SSR began.

12. On a larger scale, the establishment of higher degrees of stability and security will create important conditions for increased economic activity, an improved climate for investment, and the reduction of poverty. SSR should therefore be designed and implemented with the longer term in mind. The costs of investments in SSR may be offset at a later stage by increased tax revenue as a result of higher economic activity and unimpeded circulation of goods and people.

13. The size of the armed forces and police and their level of equipment cannot be used as a yardstick for progress in SSR in the absence of a professional “troops to tasks” analysis. In some cases there may be good reasons to absorb temporarily a higher number of personnel than would objectively be needed. In certain cases, SSR may also imply the procurement of new military equipment. For example, a smaller army may need to be more mobile, which depends on the necessary means to deploy quickly over large distances.

14. The same applies for the size of the budget. Without a clear appreciation of the process through which it is arrived at, the level of defense expenditure cannot be used as a yardstick for measuring progress. Having said that, many donors seem to express concerns mainly (and some only) on the level of expenditures. Key development partners therefore need to work towards a more nuanced and multi-faceted approach. The quality of the process matters more than its outcome in numbers.

## V. Linkages between DDR and SSR

15. DDR programs and SSR share the objective of contributing to a countrywide and, in the case of the Greater Great Lakes Region, regional process toward peace and stability and to creating better conditions for development. If they are the result of a peace process, both efforts would require the same preconditions (cease-fire, confidence building, political progress etc.). In many cases, DDR and SSR are undertaken in parallel and the success of one will depend on the success of the other.

16. The link between DDR and SSR is made explicit in the MDRP's regional strategy. In order to be eligible for funding under the MDRP, the Governments concerned are expected to submit a letter of demobilization policy that should expand on links with security sector reform, including plans for future military size and budget, military unification and restructuring where relevant. However, once such letters are submitted, there have been very few, if any, formal or informal exchanges between partners on the subject of SSR.

17. According to the MDRP strategy, a key medium to long term objective is the reallocation of public expenditures from military to economic and social sectors. However, such a reallocation of expenditures in and by itself may entail risks for stability (disenchanted officers, unpaid soldiers) if not accompanied by a defense review and other SSR measures, as well as the establishment of appropriate financial management systems that ensure a smooth transition to a new pattern of expenditures.

18. In a more practical sense, certain steps in both SSR and DDR programs may be identical: for example (temporary) absorption into the armed forces, demobilization of child soldiers and militarily unfit personnel, screening for HIV/AIDs, etc...

19. Certain decisions related to SSR can set key parameters for DDR and vice versa. For example, key decisions on the size of the army, the extent of new recruitment, and the absorption of rebel ex-combatants, provide DDR planners with information on the numbers of ex-combatants that cannot be taken into the armed forces and thus need to be demobilized. In the same vein, a SSR decision on eligibility criteria for recruitment influences the eligibility criteria for DDR beneficiaries.

20. The sequencing on DDR and SSR operations will depend on the particular circumstances of each country and the realities on the ground. In some cases, certain elements of SSR may only start after the demobilization of ex-combatants has been completed. In other cases, demobilization may actually be the result of decisions taken during reform of the security sector. Whatever actual choices may be, it is clear that both efforts need to be timed carefully in order to complement each other and support the overall peace process. Linkages between the two need to be well understood.

21. As an example, the initial step in both SSR and DDR in a post-conflict setting may be the formal establishment of "new" armed forces as part of a peace agreement or the integration of former rebel groups into the armed forces. Either before or as soon as possible after this step, the Government should determine the most cost-effective and appropriate size and composition of the armed forces in the circumstances. Any surplus personnel can thus be demobilized and reintegrated into society. The rationalization of the established (or integrated) armed forces will continue during that phase and after, which may result in a further downsizing from the established armed forces to adjust their strength as and when required. While this could take place in most cases through natural attrition, there may also be need for further demobilization support to ensure a undisrupted transition.

22. The window of opportunity for SSR and DDR in many post-conflict countries may be relatively narrow. The timetables for SSR and DDR can be under pressure from the overall peace process, including electoral timetables and exit strategies of United Nations peacekeeping operations. For SSR, this implies that there may not be enough time to do a full threat assessment and "troops to task" ratio analysis. A less refined estimate of force levels may be required to kick-start the DRR process. It is important that such initial estimates be followed up immediately by more in-depth analysis and subsequent adjustments in force structure and defense policy processes.

23. In some cases, a growth of the security sector may be vital to absorb categories of armed personnel that would otherwise constitute a significant threat to security and stability. However, this should not be a

long term solution and DDR and SSR programs should both be designed to result in a leaner, more professional and cost-effective security sector.

24. The temporary absorption of larger numbers of personnel will lead to significant pressure on the national budget, as salaries will need to be paid to all soldiers for the duration of their service in the armed forces. At the same time, an early demobilization of large numbers of soldiers may put a strain on resources available for that purpose. It is therefore important that SSR and DDR decisions be made bearing in mind any financial constraints that may exist for both undertakings.

25. It bears recalling that the MDRP does not fund SSR. Yet, since SSR and DDR are so closely linked, MDRP partners would have a legitimate interest in SSR activities to the extent they are essential for the success of DDR programs. There should thus be a mechanism of close coordination and exchange of information between the two efforts where they co-exist.

## **VI. Support for SSR**

26. For SSR to succeed, Government ownership and commitment are essential. This applies to the Government as a whole; SSR should preferably be based on a broad consensus that includes the Head of State or Government, relevant Ministers (typically Defense, Justice, the Interior, and Finance), the legislature and the leadership of the armed forces. The voices of civil society and the population at large should also be heard and taken into account. This puts a premium on a civil-military consultative process in which both sides will need to overcome any existing mistrust and/or misconceptions. As with any endeavor (such as DDR and SSR) that cuts across several disciplines and organizational entities, a strong focal point or national institution will be necessary.

27. There are relatively few institutions within the international community willing and ready to fund SSR or assist Governments in this regard. Multilateral institutions may either lack the mandate, the means or expertise to provide technical assistance in all or some areas of SSR. Development agencies, such as UNDP, are able to focus on some governance aspects and the rule of law, while the focus of the Bretton Woods Institutions (subject to Government consent) would be on public expenditures to ensure that defense budget is subject to the same standards of accountability and transparency as other components of the national budget. Bilateral partners tend to limit their assistance to training and technical aspects of military cooperation.

28. It is generally assumed that bilateral donors have a comparative advantage and more experience in addressing security sector reform issues. Yet, bilateral donors may be reluctant to provide funding for SSR, especially when the armed forces involved have been involved in human rights abuses. In some cases, a bilateral donor agrees to take the lead in a post-conflict situation in SSR. A useful division of labor and one that should ensure some coherence is for development cooperation agencies of a lead donor country to engage in governance aspects, while their colleagues in its Ministry of Defense assume responsibilities for defense management and training.

29. The lead-nation concept ensures a measure of consistency between these two aspects and naturally provides a center for coordination of all actors, national and international, engaged in SSR. Yet, the identification of a lead donor with the capacity and experience to assume such broad responsibilities is not always easy. In addition, problems of information sharing across disciplines occur in almost every multi-component organization, including donor Governments.

30. In the area of SSR (as in DDR) no one actor can do it all. This implies the need for effective cooperation arrangements, exchange of information and a division of labor built on comparative advantages among the partners involved and mirrored in their internal coordination arrangements. Where SSR is undertaken conjointly with DDR or another peace effort with international support, there is an obvious need for transparency and sharing of information by the partners involved in both processes. This would facilitate both planning for and implementation of DDR and SSR programs, promote the coherence between both activities, avoid a competition for scarce resources and ensure that budget implications are thought through at both ends. Ideally, partners involved in DDR and SSR should agree

on a joint plan for those areas where programs overlap, such as eligibility criteria for ex-combatants or on the modalities for absorption in/discharge from the army.

31. SSR will be watched closely by neighboring countries, especially in a post-conflict setting where the level of confidence in the region may be relatively low. There is a good argument, therefore, for the regular exchange of information and other confidence building measures at regional level. Regional frameworks for cooperation can have a significant role to play in SSR (cf. OSCE in Europe).

## VII. SSR tasks in MDRP countries

32. The letter of demobilization policy submitted by the Government of **Angola** sets out elements of its security sector modernization plans. This involved a decrease of the armed and paramilitary forces to a level of 90,000 forces. The decrease would be achieved through a demobilization of personnel under criteria that are elaborated in the letter. The Government also indicated that it would enhance the transparency and accountability of public spending, including with respect to the security sector. In this regard, the Government would strengthen public financial management systems and improve public procurement practices. Reportedly, only limited progress has been made in these areas.

33. The integration of Burundian armed movements into the national security forces is a central issue in the **Burundi** peace process. A significant integration of members of armed movements would imply a substantial restructuring of the new defense and security forces. At the same time, the Government is in the process of preparing a national demobilization and reintegration program within the framework of the MDRP that would seek to (i) respond to immediate demobilization needs and (ii) facilitate a gradual downsizing of the new defense and security forces over a period of 45 years. The national program would thus need to link closely with the security sector reform process. However, in the current context of on-going negotiations, the Government has been reluctant to engage the international community in a substantive dialogue about security sector reform issues. The Government will elaborate a letter of demobilization policy before submitting its national program to MDRP partners for financing.

34. The Government of the **Central African Republic** has indicated its plans to reform the security sector and there appears to be a general consensus at all levels that the army and police forces need a thorough overhaul. It would be necessary to develop a policy for the restructuring of the army and security forces, which is an important precondition for the establishment of a national DDR program and the return of security and stability. The issue is being discussed as part of the National Dialogue and a plan for the restructuring of the security sector is being prepared with the assistance of France.

35. **Congo**: the Government is in the process of preparing a demobilization and reintegration program that will include aspects of security sector reform. France is providing assistance to the process of the restructuring of the army and gendarmerie. A census of existing forces is almost complete, which will serve as the basis for a further analysis of security needs.

36. The establishment of a transitional Government in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** has set the stage for the preparation of a national plan for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and a concurrent review of the security sector. However, clear links between the DDR planning effort and SSR are yet to be fully developed and the parties involved still need to provide of detailed information on the total numbers of combatants and ex-combatants that would be covered by DDR and SSR. Some donors have expressed interest in providing the necessary support.

37. The Government of **Rwanda** submitted a letter of demobilization and reintegration policy in which it described the restructuring of its security sector initiated in 2000. This restructuring included the separation of the army and national police and a reduction of the army from 40.000 to 25.000 by the end of 2004. The Government also indicated that it would enhance the transparency of public expenditure management, including that of the security sector, and strengthen its financial management systems.

38. In **Uganda**, the on-going defense review process includes a threat assessment, analysis of foreign policy and development of a security policy, determination of capability and force requirements, examination of supporting structures and processes, and the publication of a "White Paper" on policy and

agenda for change. This process is nearing completion with the expected presentation of the White Paper to Parliament in November or December of this year. The Government led initiative, supported by the UK Government, has been comprehensive in regards to the armed forces and is expected to instruct subsequent negotiations with the development partner community on the level and nature of national defense spending, as well as on a demobilization program for armed personnel.

### **VIII. Suggestions for the consideration of MDRP partners**

39. This note has highlighted the close links that exist between DDR and SSR, particularly in a post-conflict environment. MDRP partners may wish to consider the following suggestions that may help to advance the quality and relevance of national and regional strategies for demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. Another important objective would be to promote transparency in DDR and SSR matters within the MDRP region, which could contribute to the building of confidence and the improvement of relations in the region.

- a. In evaluating new proposals and the progress made in the implementation of current programs, MDRP partners may wish to agree that the technical and substantive evaluation of existing and future DDR programs include a summary review of any security sector reform efforts and indicators of success, that are relevant to DDR programs or the larger peace process;
- b. Where this is warranted, such a review could include possible recommendations for improvement in this area;
- c. The necessary expertise for a review of security sector reform may be provided by partners having such a capacity;
- d. On a voluntary basis, Governments of MDRP countries could provide information on SSR to MDRP partners on a regular basis;
- e. Where partners have taken on a role in SSR on a bilateral basis with Governments of MDRP countries; such partners may wish to provide information to the MDRP partnership on progress made in SSR (with the consent of and in coordination with the Governments involved);
- f. The information referred to under d. and e. may be included in the quarterly MDRP progress reports or in the status reports submitted to the Partners' meetings;
- g. Partners active in SSR in a MDRP country may wish to establish joint coordination mechanisms that ensure a coherent approach, a clear division of labor and maximum synergy with DDR programs.
- h. To promote mutual understanding and exchange information, MDRP partners may wish to consider devoting a special meeting of the Technical Coordination Group and interested MDRP focal points to the subject of SSR. The purpose of such a meeting would be to review experiences and best practices, build confidence and enhance transparency in the area of SSR and possibly to establish a network of interested partners;
- i. MDRP partners may wish agree that one among them serve as a focal point for SSR issues in the MDRP context.

