



## **DDR and Former Female Combatants**



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## INTRODUCTION

The arenas of conflict and peace-building have traditionally been dominated by male actors and masculine paradigms. It has often been observed that the roles of women and the impact of war and conflict on women have historically been consistently and systematically overlooked, however, in recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of the unique and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000 was a critical turning point in international discourse on women, peace and security, focusing international attention on impacts of war and peace on women and calling on international actors to adopt an inclusive and gender-responsive approach to conflict resolution and peace building.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For further DPI publications on this subject see: DPI Working Paper, *A Study into the Ways to Better Incorporate Women into Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Through the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, (DPI, London, November 2014), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/a-study-into-the-ways-to-better-incorporate-women-into-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution-through-the-implementation-of-uns-cr-1325-2/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015); DPI Working Paper, *Incorporating Women into Peacebuilding and Democratic Reform*, (DPI, London, September 2012), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/gender-development-and-conflict-resolution-enhancing-rights-equitable-practice/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015); Manchanda, Rita, *Gender, Development and Conflict Resolution: Enhancing Rights & Equitable Practice*, (DPI, London, October 2012), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/gender-development-and-conflict-resolution-enhancing-rights-equitable-practice/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015); DPI Working Paper, *The Gendered Effect of Conflict: Turkey* (DPI, London, August 2011), available at <[http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/9a.The-Gendered-Effect-of-Conflict\\_Turkey\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/9a.The-Gendered-Effect-of-Conflict_Turkey_ENGLISH.pdf)> (last accessed 15 December 2015).

2 Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (28 September 2010) S/2010/498, available at <<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/News/In%20Focus/Open%20Debate%20on%20WPS%202013/2013%20SG%20report%20on%20WPS%20pdf.pdf>> (last accessed 8 December 2015), para 1.

A key limb in the conflict resolution and reconstruction ‘toolkit’ is the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and UNSCR 1325 expressly refers to the need to take into account the different needs of men and women in all aspects of DDR.<sup>3</sup> Women have been and remain active and crucial actors in all facets of conflict and post-conflict settings, including, sometimes, in apparently contradictory ways. For example, women can be both victims and perpetrators of violence – and in many cases, women are both at the same time. Women may join up voluntarily, motivated by political or social agendas, or be compelled or forcibly abducted. Conflicts often also upend traditional gender norms, imposing new responsibilities and providing new opportunities compared to the pre-war status quo. It is essential to understand the multifaceted and complex roles of women in conflict and peace in order to properly design and implement successful and inclusive DDR programmes.

As UN Women<sup>4</sup> has observed, the last 15 years have shown a growing awareness and understanding of women’s roles and interests in the DDR process – as former combatants, members of host communities and as users of security services.<sup>5</sup> This paper will focus on female former combatants, including within the term ‘combatants’ all women who have participated in armed conflict as members of armed groups, whether they engaged in actual armed combat or played other roles in such groups.

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3 UNSCR 1325, Article 13.

4 UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. See more at: <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us#sthash.zbqayb1q.dpuf>>.

5 UN Women (2015), ‘Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 178.

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The first chapter of this paper will set the scene, providing an outline of key concepts, examining the roles and experiences of female combatants and addressing the question of why it is important to ensure DDR programmes are gender-responsive. The second chapter will consider the key elements of DDR programmes, including examples of past practice regarding the inclusion and treatment of former female combatants. Finally, the third chapter will draw together some key themes and lessons learned from recent DDR experiences internationally.

This paper forms part of DPI's ongoing research programmes in the areas of DDR and the gendered effects of conflict. With special thanks to Larissa Chu for her invaluable work on this paper.



Kerim Yildiz  
Chief Executive Officer  
Democratic Progress Institute  
February 2016

## CHAPTER 1: DDR AND WOMEN: SETTING THE SCENE

### 1.1 What is DDR?

The process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is widely recognised as one of the key limbs in a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction strategy, which includes the peace process and development of a political solution to conflict, social security reform and transitional justice.<sup>6</sup> Over 60 formal DDR processes have been initiated in over 40 countries since the late 1980s.<sup>7</sup> DDR has been said to be a “transitory tool”<sup>8</sup> or “transitional safety net”,<sup>9</sup> which facilitates the transition from conflict to peace by supporting individuals to move from being participants in war to participants civilian life.

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6 See DPI Working Paper, *DDR and the Complexity of Contemporary Conflict*, (DPI, London, October 2012) for a more general discussion on DDR which is beyond the scope of this paper.

7 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 2.

8 Banholzer, Lilli (2014) ‘When Do Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes Succeed?’ Bonn, German Development Institute, available at <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=179537>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 9.

9 Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilisation Reintegration (2006), Final report, p 25, cited in Banholzer, Lilli (2014) ‘When Do Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes Succeed?’ Bonn, German Development Institute, available at <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=179537>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 9.



The United Nations defines the key limbs of DDR as follows:

- **Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes.
- **Demobilization** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion.
- **Reinsertion** is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.

· **Reintegration** is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance.<sup>10</sup>

While each phase of DDR may appear to be sequential, practical experience has demonstrated that DDR processes are highly interdependent and often overlap in time and place<sup>11</sup>, and no one DDR is the same.

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10 United Nations Secretary-General Note to the General Assembly (May 2005), A/C.5/59/31, cited in the United Nations Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Resource Centre, available at [http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction\\_1.aspx](http://www.unddr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx) (last accessed 27 October 2015).

11 Report of the Secretary-General on the Role of United Nations Peacekeeping in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (11 February 2000) S/2000/101, available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/role-united-nations-peacekeeping-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-report> (last accessed on 8 December 2015), para 8; Fusato, Massimo, 'Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants' *Beyond Intractability*, eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder (July 2003), at <http://www.beyonddisarmament.org/essay/demobilization> (last accessed 27 October 2015).

## 1.2 Rationale for DDR

The fundamental purpose of DDR is to promote security and stability in order to support economic and social recovery in a post-conflict setting<sup>12</sup> and there are many ways in which DDR contributes to this purpose, including:

- Preventing the re-emergence of armed conflict – this is the most commonly cited benefit of successful DDR programmes as former combatants can be a major source of destabilisation. Dissatisfaction with the peace settlement or difficulties settling into civilian life can be “powerful triggers” for former combatants to return to violence.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the removal of weapons often plays a significant role in rebuilding trust in a post-conflict environment.<sup>14</sup>
- Supporting the potential contribution of former combatants to civilian life, who often have critical skills, experience and networks from both before and during the conflict that can be vital to the reconstruction process.<sup>15</sup>

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12 Muggah, Robert, ‘Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration’, in Chetail, Vincent (ed), *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p 127; United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards, module 1.10, paras 1-2.

13 Banholzer, Lilli (2014) ‘When Do Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes Succeed?’ Bonn, German Development Institute, available at <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&cid=179537>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 3.

14 Rolston, Bill, (2007), ‘Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective’, *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259.

15 Rolston, Bill, (2007), ‘Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective’, *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 263.

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- Providing a level of compensatory justice to former combatants for their contributions to the conflict, in the form of substantive financial or other compensation and/or formal recognition.<sup>16</sup>
  - Addressing humanitarian needs of former combatants and their communities. Former combatants are often also victims of violence and conflict, with many active participants in war – particularly women and children – having been coerced into joining armed forces or inspired by the circumstances of repression and injustice to take up arms. Reintegration programmes that address the rights and needs of former combatants are critical contributors to the long-term stability and social and economic development of communities in post-conflict settings.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Banholzer, Lilli (2014) 'When Do Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programmes Succeed?' Bonn, German Development Institute, available at <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&cid=179537>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 5; Rolston, Bill, (2007), 'Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective', *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 262.

17 Rolston, Bill, (2007), 'Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective', *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 261.

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### 1.3 Vital components of DDR

DDR programmes should be designed for the specific circumstances of a conflict and the needs and capacity of both former combatants and the communities involved. As such policy guidance and commentators have frequently stressed the importance of adopting a flexible approach to design and implementation.<sup>18</sup> There are, however, some key overriding themes which are consistently cited as critical to the success of a DDR programme, including:

- there must be genuine political will amongst all relevant parties to the conflict to achieve sustainable peace and the more specific goals of DDR;<sup>19</sup>
- DDR programmes are generally most successful when they follow on formal peace settlement and the key terms of the DDR arrangements form part of the peace agreement which has the buy-in of all relevant parties to the conflict;<sup>20</sup> and
- there is also broad consensus that DDR should form part of a wider comprehensive strategy for the social and economic recovery and development of the country or region in question.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Rolston, Bill, (2007), 'Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective', *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 277; Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), Module 2.10, para 5.2.

19 Report of the Secretary-General on the Role of United Nations Peacekeeping in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (11 February 2000) S/2000/101, available at <<http://reliefweb.int/report/world/role-united-nations-peacekeeping-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-report>> (last accessed on 8 December 2015), para 4.

20 UN, "Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards," 2.10, 3; Enloe

21 Banholzer p20 UNDP Practice Paper: "DDR must therefore be conceptualized, designed, planned and implemented within a wider recovery and development framework." (p11) – see para on page 19 as well

What is evident from the above is that DDR programmes are not merely technical or mechanical processes, but highly politically sensitive and often a key point of negotiation for all parties. DDR has both a practical and symbolic function as one of the first steps on the long road to peace and stability.<sup>22</sup>

The disarmament process, in particular, is often one of the most politically fraught elements of a peace agreement due to the ideological, strategic and tactical concerns of armed groups that do not want to be seen to have “surrendered” as part of the peace process,<sup>23</sup> accordingly the use of commissions which are perceived to be independent and impartial – often involving international parties – has been a successful strategy in some conflicts. For example, in Northern Ireland, as part of the Good Friday Agreement, the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) was established to oversee the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. General John de Chastelain from Canada was appointed Chairman of the IICD and other members included parties from Finland and South Africa.<sup>24</sup> The IICD oversaw the handing in weapons confidentially over several years, with the IICD announcing that disarmament had been completed on 26 September 2005.<sup>25</sup>

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22 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) ‘The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes’, *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 28.

23 Rolston, Bill, (2007), ‘Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective’, *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 268.

24 DPI Comparative Study Visit Report, *Conflict Resolution, The Irish Experience*, (DPI, London, February 2015), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/comparative-study-visit-report-to-dublin-ireland-15-18th-february-2015/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015), p 30.

25 DPI Comparative Study Visit Report, *Conflict Resolution, The Irish Experience*, (DPI, London, February 2015), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/comparative-study-visit-report-to-dublin-ireland-15-18th-february-2015/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015), p 30-31.

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While disarmament is often one of the key negotiating issues in peace processes, at the other end of the DDR trajectory, reintegration is often seen to be the most complex and difficult element of DDR to effectively implement and monitor. Long-term goals of effective social and economic reintegration into host communities that have often experienced violence during the conflict need to take into account the combatants' experiences, motivations and skills and the wider social, political and economic dynamics on those communities. Further, since the initial stages and political buy-in for the negotiated peace solution is critical, there has been a tendency in the past for DDR planning and funding to focus on short-term goals, without sufficient attention being paid to the more complex and long-term goal of sustainable reintegration.

## 1.4 Gender and women in conflict

The term 'gender' goes beyond the physiological differences between men and women and includes the social expectations and values associated with being male and female. UN Women defines gender as follows:

**Gender:** refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men... Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities....<sup>26</sup>

It is often observed that war, violence and aggression are traditionally associated with men and masculinity while women are traditionally assumed to be peaceful and passive.<sup>27</sup>

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26 UN Women, 'Gender mainstreaming – concepts and definitions', at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> (last accessed 11 November 2015).

27 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) 'Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs', thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p16; BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 'Gender and Armed Conflict', *BRIDGE Bulletin Gender and Development InBrief*, 13, August 2003, available at <<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-armed-conflict>> (last accessed 8 December 2015).

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Many gender specialists have observed that these gender stereotypes have had the effect of concealing “how women are affected by and more importantly actively participate in violent conflicts and wars”<sup>28</sup> and deny the agency of women as “actors in social, economic and political structures”<sup>29</sup>. These gender stereotypes have informed most traditional approaches to conflict resolution and reconstruction, and as such, have largely overlooked the variety of roles of women in conflict – casting women’s experiences of war as essentially that of passive victims. This ‘gender-blindness’ is particularly acute in the DDR sector, as these paradigms reinforce the notion that male combatants are a greater threat to peace and security than female combatants, or minimise the scale and importance of women’s roles in armed groups, with the result that women’s participation in war has often been ignored and excluded in the design and implementation of programmes for former combatants.<sup>30</sup>

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28 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) ‘*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*’, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 7.

29 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) ‘*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*’, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 7.

30 GSDRC, Topic Guide – Gender, Statebuilding and Peacebuilding, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/topic-guides/gender/gender-statebuilding-and-peacebuilding/#ddr>> last accessed 8 December 2015.

Indeed, in some settings, there is active resistance to the idea that female combatants play a crucial role in conflict. For example, interviews with male combatants in different parts of South Asia by Shekhawat and Pathu reveal a view of women's roles as providing 'merely' supportive functions, which are an extension of their existing 'female' roles, and since such work is not as dangerous or important, female combatants are not deserving of the same recognition or DDR benefits as male combatants.<sup>31</sup>

In light of the traditional gendered views of war and conflict and the unique challenges presented by these paradigms, the focus of this paper will be on how female combatants are addressed in DDR programmes. It should be noted, however, that addressing gender concerns in DDR goes beyond merely considering the role and needs of women in armed conflict. The implications of male stereotypes and traditional roles are also a critical component of gender mainstreaming on a conflict setting.<sup>32</sup>

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31 Shekhawat, Seema and Pathak, Bishnu, 'Female Combatants, the Peace Process and the Exclusion', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp 61-62.

32 See for example, United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, (2012) 'Blame it on the War? The Gender Dimensions of Violence in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration', available at <<http://www.iddrtg.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/IAWG-Blame-it-on-the-War-15-June-2012-Final.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015).

## 1.5 Why is gender mainstreaming important in DDR?

Arguments for adopting a more gender-responsive approach to DDR fall into three main categories.<sup>33</sup> The first focuses on the implications for female ex-combatants, the second on the benefits to the peace process more generally and the third on wider community development goals of ‘remaking’ more gender-balanced post-conflict societies.

From a humanitarian perspective, the failure to take into account gender considerations has been a significant gap in past DDR programmes which has resulted in both a deficit in programmes which address female-specific needs in a post-conflict setting and, in many cases, female combatants self-demobilising without the range of benefits and assistance made available to their male counterparts, either due to exclusion by policy design or exclusion by choice to avoid risks to personal safety or reputation.<sup>34</sup> Past experience demonstrates that female former combatants are likely to be the most adversely affected following a ceasefire, as they continue to be at risk of violence, often have household and/or childrearing obligations and remain at a disadvantage in terms of income-earning capacity compared to men.<sup>35</sup>

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33 This paper focuses on the importance of gender mainstreaming in DDR. For a detailed analysis of the importance of gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding and conflict resolution please see Manchanda, Rita, *Gender, Development and Conflict Resolution: Enhancing Rights & Equitable Practice*, (DPI, London, October 2012), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/gender-development-and-conflict-resolution-enhancing-rights-equitable-practice/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015).

34 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 2.30, para 5.4.

35 Specht, Irma and Atlee, Larry (2006), ‘The reintegration of teenage girls and young women’, *Intervention*, 4(3), 219-228, p 222.

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In addition to the concerns for women themselves, policymakers in recent years have frequently cited the benefits to conflict resolution and peace building of including women in all aspects of the peace process, including DDR.<sup>36</sup> In an analysis of 174 countries, researchers have concluded that the best predictor of a state's peacefulness is how well women are treated, exceeding all other factors, including levels of democracy, measures of wealth and diversity in ethnicity or religion.<sup>37</sup> In its 2015 global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (UN Global Study), UN Women concludes that its research "comprehensively demonstrates that the participation of women at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness, success and sustainability of peace processes and peacebuilding efforts"<sup>38</sup>.

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36 See for example: Haynes, Dina Francesca, Cahn, Naomi and Ni Aoláin, (2012) 'Women in the Post-Conflict Process: Reviewing the Impact of Recent UN Actions in Achieving Gender Centrality', *Santa Clara Journal of International Law*, 11(1), 189-217, p 196.

37 O'Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) '*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*', The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 3; Hudson, Valerie, 'What Sex means for World Peace', (24 April 2012) *Foreign Policy*, available at <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/24/what-sex-means-for-world-peace/>> (last accessed 10 December 2015).

38 UN Women (2015), '*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*', available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 15.

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The finding that gender inequality is positively correlated to instability and violent conflict is reinforced by practical lessons learned in the DDR process, with practitioners observing that “the long-term success of DDR can be made or broken based on the experiences of female former combatants and of women living in receiving communities”.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the emergence from conflict can be a transformational period for a society and academics and practitioners have often viewed a post-conflict period as an opportunity to ‘remake’ a society’s fundamental legal, social and political institutions and paradigms – particularly for the benefit of those groups which have traditionally been most marginalised or underrepresented.<sup>40</sup>

While this paper’s focus is on female former combatants, it should be noted that all women play a key role in DDR processes – including those women who belong to the host/receiving communities. In an oft-cited study in Sierra Leone, women were most commonly identified by former combatants as playing a significant role in their reintegration, with 55 per cent of respondents nominating women, compared to 20 per cent citing traditional or community leaders and 32 per cent citing international aid workers.<sup>41</sup>

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39 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 3.

40 Cahn, Naomi, Haynes, Dina and Ní Aoláin, Fionnuala (2010), ‘Returning Home: Women in Post-Conflict Societies’ *Baltimore Law Review* 39 339-369, available at <[https://law.ubalt.edu/downloads/law\\_downloads/Cahn\\_After\\_First\\_EIC\\_Edit%5B1%5D1.pdf](https://law.ubalt.edu/downloads/law_downloads/Cahn_After_First_EIC_Edit%5B1%5D1.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015), pp 192-193.

41 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 3.

In addition to practical roles played by women, their roles as informal community leaders should not be underestimated and women often “carry determinative moral authority, dictating whether returning fighters will be welcomed or ostracized”.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, a holistic gender-responsive DDR programme should take into account the roles, experiences and vulnerabilities of all members in a post-conflict community: men, women and children, combatants and non-combatants.

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42 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) *Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 3.

## 1.6 Women's participation in conflict and post-conflict settings

In the last few decades there has been an increasing awareness in both policy and practice that both men and women play active roles in armed conflicts. The nature and extent of women's involvement in armed conflicts vary greatly from conflict to conflict and between individuals' experiences within a conflict. Studies show, however, that women and girls often comprise a substantial minority of active combatants in armed forces (including formal government forces, rebel movements, paramilitary forces and militias).<sup>43</sup> For example:

- during the Eritrean war for independence, women comprised 25-30 per cent of combatants in the Eritrean People's Liberation Front;<sup>44</sup>
- in Colombia it is currently estimated that up to 40 per cent of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) combatants are women;<sup>45</sup> and
- in Nepal 20 per cent of those who qualified for formal DDR were women.

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43 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) '*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*', Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015) pp 9-10.

44 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) '*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*', Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015) p 10.

45 O'Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) '*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*', The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 2.

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Within such armed groups women have taken on a plethora of roles – and in some cases may alternate between various responsibilities, including armed activities like frontline combat or defending camps, to more traditionally ‘female’ support functions such as providing essential services such as cooking, cleaning, agricultural labour and trade.<sup>46</sup> What is clear is that the roles played by women in armed forces are not peripheral or merely as dependents, but are in fact critical to the operation and maintenance of functioning war operations.<sup>47</sup>

An important dimension of women’s experiences in armed conflict is violence and sexual exploitation. While gender-based violence against women<sup>48</sup> – both civilian and combatant – can often be traced backed to pre-conflict gender inequalities, it often increases in frequency and intensity and becomes common practice during conflicts.<sup>49</sup> Women combatants may well be perpetrators of violence, but are also frequently the victims of violence – either at the hands of the enemy or their own groups.<sup>50</sup>

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46 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) ‘*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*’, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp9-10; Rolston, Bill, (2007), ‘Demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants: the Irish case in international perspective’, *Social & Legal Studies* 16(2), 259, p 261.

47 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) ‘*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*’, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 17.

48 Gender-based violence extends to sexual, physical and psychological violence occurring in the home, communities and that which is condoned by the state. This paper focuses on gender-based violence against female combatants in particular; however, it is important to recognise that gender-based violence affects both men and women.

49 Bouta, Tsjard, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘*Gender Conflict and Development*’, The World Bank (2005), available at <<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 33.

50 Shekhawat, Seema, ‘*Introduction: Women in Conflict and Peace*’ in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 6.



There is extensive evidence of women and girls being taken as ‘bush wives’ or sex slaves during conflict – sometimes this results from forcible abductions and other times women may choose to marry a member of their group as a form of protection from violence.<sup>51</sup> It should be noted, however, that while the occurrence of sexual violence is distressingly widespread and systematic in many conflict settings,<sup>52</sup> it would be inaccurate to assume that all women ex-combatants have been the subject of abuse.<sup>53</sup> Further, during post-conflict periods, research shows that violence against women often remains widespread (or increases in prevalence), but moves from the ‘public’ sphere of war to the ‘private’ sphere of the home.<sup>54</sup> This has been attributed to the ‘normalisation’ of violence against women during conflict, the effects of trauma suffered by men during war and frustrations in the post-conflict period manifesting in domestic violence, the continued availability of weapons and the lack of jobs, shelter and essential services.<sup>55</sup>

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51 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘Gender Conflict and Development’, The World Bank (2005), available at <<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 15.

52 Rehn, Elisabeth and Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson, ‘*Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building*’, UNIFEM, (2002), available at <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2002/1/women-war-peace-the-independent-experts-assessment-on-the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-women-and-women-s-role-in-peace-building-progress-of-the-world-s-women-2002-vol-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), pp 9-10.

53 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) ‘*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*’, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 18.

54 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘Gender Conflict and Development’, The World Bank (2005), available at <<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 38.

55 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘Gender Conflict and Development’, The World Bank (2005), available at <<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 38.

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Women's reasons for joining armed groups are varied and multifaceted. Women, of course, often join armed forces for the same ideological or political reasons as men – such as a desire for self-government or autonomy. Some women join as an alternative or escape from oppression or traditional gender roles, particularly in conflict settings where armed groups have explicitly included gender equality as one of its principles. Indeed, in Nepal and Peru, armed groups expressly targeted recruitment drives at women with a promise of gender equality.<sup>56</sup> In El Salvador, research revealed that women's motivations for joining the armed opposition group (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)) were often linked to individual's geographical and socio-economic background: women who joined for political reasons often came from urban areas, were from lower and middle class backgrounds and had some education, while women from rural areas more frequently cited survival as their reason for joining – both because others in their communities had joined and for protection against government repression.<sup>57</sup> In other conflicts, however, the abduction and/or coercion of women and children have also been a common 'recruitment' tactic.<sup>58</sup>

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56 Colekessian, Ani (2009), '*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*', Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender_A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015); Boutron, Camille, 'Women at War, War on Women: Reconciliation and Patriarchy in Peru' in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 149.

57 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) '*Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*', Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 12.

58 See for example, the history of the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern, Northwestern and Eastern Uganda as well as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, with mass abductions beginning from the 1990s, re-

Women will have gender-specific needs and concerns which can be particularly acute in a post-conflict setting. Some more practical needs include reproductive health services, child care and maternity care and psychological support associated with the consequences of sexual violence. Another gender-specific concern of many former female combatants is the social stigma associated with their involvement in conflict – particularly where such participation transgresses the traditional gender norms in the communities affected by the conflict. For example, in Nepal it was found that there was a widely-held perception that women who were members of armed forces were aggressive, highly promiscuous or homosexual.<sup>59</sup> Many women have reported a reluctance to return to their homes and communities for fear of the social stigma that attaches to their participation in war or, having returned, other women have reported experiencing threats and rejection from their communities.<sup>60</sup>

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sulting in an estimated 52,000 to 75,000 abductees (male and female): Newman, Carter (2014), 'No One To Stand By Us: Reintegrating Formerly Abducted Child-Mothers in Uganda' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8(4) 357–380.

59 Colekessian, Ani (2009), '*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*', Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender_A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp 6 and 12.

60 Colekessian, Ani (2009), '*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*', Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender_A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 12.

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## 1.7 International normative framework

A key milestone in addressing the challenges of gender and women in conflict was the passing of Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000.<sup>61</sup> Under this resolution, the United Nations Security Council expressly acknowledged the importance and unique experiences of women in conflict settings and peace building and post-conflict processes. In particular, the preamble to UNSCR 1325 reaffirms “the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”. UNSCR 1325 goes on to call on all actors to, amongst other things:

- recognise “the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction”<sup>62</sup> in negotiating and implementing peace agreements; and
- “encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants”.<sup>63</sup>

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61 For a general summary of gender-based rights related to conflict situations refer to DPI Legal Factsheet, *Conflict Related Gender Based Rights*, (DPI, London, October 2015), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/dpi-legal-factsheet-conflict-related-gender-based-rights/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015).

62 UNSCR 1325, Article 8(a).

63 UNSCR 1325, Article 13.

Since 2000, various United Nations and other multilateral and non-governmental organisations have issued policy papers and guidance on gender mainstreaming in DDR. The Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) were developed by the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (IAWG – DDR) in the period between 2004 and 2006. Consistent with the call to arms in UNSCR 1325, the development of these standards involved wide consultation on how to integrate gender and women’s issues and ultimately integrated gender concerns throughout each chapter, as well as having separate sections on women and children, in order to ensure that gender issues were not overlooked as a ‘specialist’ area of concern.<sup>64</sup> The IDDRS were considered by gender advocates as “one of the most gender-sensitive documents in the UN”<sup>65</sup> and as a practical toolkit for DDR practitioners, this success is an important policy step in gender mainstreaming. The development of a robust policy and normative framework does not, however, ensure that gender-sensitive approaches to DDR have been successfully incorporated in practice, as is addressed in the following chapter.

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64 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) *‘Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs’*, thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 32.

65 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) *‘Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs’*, thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 32.

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## **CHAPTER 2: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER-INCLUSIVE DDR PROGRAMMES**

This chapter considers some of the specific aspects of DDR programmes and the challenges and opportunities in adopting an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach for female former combatants. It is clear that in the past the differences in the experiences of men and women in armed conflict have not been adequately taken into account in the development and implementation of DDR programmes. Some of the key challenges in this regard are:

- ensuring the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and decision-making, including in respect of DDR;
- ensuring that eligibility criteria for DDR programmes are inclusive and available to such women; and
- ensuring that the facilities, benefits and support offered by DDR programmes provide for the specific needs and opportunities of female participants in conflict.
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### **2.1 Participation in peace processes and DDR decision-making**

A number of Security Council resolutions have called upon the international community to improve women's participation in peace processes, including in leadership roles. These include UNSCR 1325, UNSCR 1820 in 2008 and UNSCR 1889 in 2009 and both UNSCR 2022 and UNSCR 2122 in 2013.

Research and statistics indicate that women's participation in major peace processes has increased in the past few decades, but remains very low. For example, only 2.5 per cent of signatories to

major peace agreements between 1992 and 2012 were women.<sup>66</sup> A study of 585 peace agreements signed between 1990 and 2010 revealed that only 16 per cent (92 agreements) contained any specific references to women – this figure includes both provisions that limit and promote gender equality,<sup>67</sup> which demonstrates that the peace processes that actively sought to further the interests of women and gender equality form even less than 16 per cent.

The arguments in favour of including women in decision making and peace negotiations are manifold, as are the recommendations on how to increase women's participation in both formal and informal settings.<sup>68</sup>

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66 Haynes, Dina Francesca, Cahn, Naomi and Ni Aoláin, (2012) 'Women in the Post-Conflict Process: Reviewing the Impact of Recent UN Actions in Achieving Gender Centrality', *Santa Clara Journal of International Law*, 11(1), 189-217, p 195.

67 Shekhawat, Seema and Pathak, Bishnu, 'Female Combatants, the Peace Process and the Exclusion', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp 56-57, citing Bell and Rouke "Peace Agreement or Pieces of Paper?" The Impact of 1325 Resolution on Peace Processes and Their Agreement', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 59(4), 2010, 942.

68 For further information, see other DPI publications, including DPI Working Paper, *A Study into the Ways to Better Incorporate Women into Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Through the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, (DPI, London, November 2014), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/a-study-into-the-ways-to-better-incorporate-women-into-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution-through-the-implementation-of-uns-1325-2/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015); DPI Working Paper, *Incorporating Women into Peacebuilding and Democratic Reform*, (DPI, London, September 2012), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/gender-development-and-conflict-resolution-enhancing-rights-equitable-practice/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015); DPI Working Paper, *The Gendered Effect of Conflict: Turkey* (DPI, London, August 2011), available at <[http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/9a.The-Gendered-Effect-of-Conflict\\_Turkey\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/9a.The-Gendered-Effect-of-Conflict_Turkey_ENGLISH.pdf)> (last accessed 15 December 2015).

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These have been extensively canvassed by gender advocates in the conflict resolution and security field and are beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>69</sup> However, it is worth noting here that there are demonstrated benefits to including women in peace processes – both for broader peace and security and for furthering gender equality. A recent study of peace processes between 2011 and 2015, concluded, firstly, that in cases with greater participation and strong influence by women an agreement was almost always reached, and secondly, that the strong influence of women in these processes was “positively correlated with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented”.<sup>70</sup>

Further, evidence from previous peacebuilding processes indicate that women’s participation in the peace process contribute significantly to the inclusion of gender issues in negotiations and peace agreements and women often introduce conflict experiences and priorities which differ from the mainstream traditional perspectives of conflict to the negotiating table. This impact has been important even in circumstances where gender concerns were not expressly addressed in the peace process. For example, in El Salvador, where high-ranking women in both FMLN (the armed opposition group) and the government were active participants in

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69 See for example, Shekhawat, Seema and Pathak, Bishnu, ‘*Female Combatants, the Peace Process and the Exclusion*’, in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 59; UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015) and Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘*Gender Conflict and Development*’, The World Bank (2005), available at <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1> (last accessed 10 December 2015).

70 UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 41.

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all phases of negotiations, it was observed that the mere presence of women at the negotiating table was critical as female negotiators were able to object when it became clear that other negotiators had assumed that the only beneficiaries of reintegration benefits would be men and accordingly women had not been included in the agreed list of beneficiaries.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, experience in the Philippines suggests that, while including women in peace negotiations is necessary, it is not always sufficient to ensure that women's interests are adequately taken into account. It was observed by some in the Philippines that the women involved in the peace discussions were not adequately representative of female combatants, did not have high enough levels of authority and there were only limited numbers of women involved.<sup>72</sup> These limitations hampered the ability of the female negotiators to effectively advocate for the rights of women in the peace process.<sup>73</sup>

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71 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) '*Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*', Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 3.

72 UN Women, '*Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls*' (2010), available at <[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_in-straw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_in-straw_2010.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 6-7.

73 UN Women, '*Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls*' (2010), available at <[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_in-straw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_in-straw_2010.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 6-7.

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## 2.2 Eligibility for DDR

One of the initial steps in the design of an inclusive and effective DDR programme is establishing the criteria for eligibility of individuals to enter into DDR programmes.<sup>74</sup> The goal is to ensure all participants in armed groups are entitled and able to access the appropriate programme.

Paragraph 5.1 of Module 2.30 of the IDDRS states that such criteria should:

... avoid allowing persons to enter the programme simply because they have surrendered weapons or ammunition. Rather, the **criteria should be based on tests to determine an individual's membership of an armed force or group.** All those who are found to be members of an armed force or group, whether they were involved in active combat or in support roles (such as cooks, porters, messengers, administrators, sex slaves and 'war wives'), shall be considered part of the armed force or group and therefore shall be included in the DDR programme. (emphasis added)

A study of female fighters in 11 African conflicts, estimated that only 6.5 per cent of all registered DDR participants were women and the primary reason given for the non-inclusion of women was that they had not been identified as 'combatants'.<sup>75</sup>

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74 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women) (2004) '*Getting it Right and Doing it Right: Gender, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration*', available at <[http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUUpload/Members/Documents/15@Getting\\_it\\_Right\\_Doing\\_it\\_Right.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUUpload/Members/Documents/15@Getting_it_Right_Doing_it_Right.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015), p 4.

75 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) '*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*', Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp 21-22.

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Earlier DDR programmes failed to acknowledge the importance of women's roles in armed forces, characterising them as mere 'camp followers' or dependents, and frequently ignoring the fact that women were active combatants due to their other non-combat roles or their lack of weapons.<sup>76</sup> While DDR programmes do not often expressly exclude female combatants, both the narrowness of the eligibility criteria and the failure to take into account certain gender-specific challenges have limited the ability and willingness of many women to participate in formal DDR programmes.

An example of how eligibility criteria can implicitly exclude women can be found in the DDR programme in Sierra Leone which required individuals to hand in weapons as the first and only eligibility requirement.<sup>77</sup> There is considerable evidence that such an approach severely disadvantaged female members of armed groups and there was a significant difference between the number of women estimated to have been members of armed forces and women's participation in the formal DDR programme.<sup>78</sup>

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76 Coulter, Chris, Persson, Mariam and Utas, Mats, (2008) '*Young Female Fighters in African Wars: Conflict and its Consequences*', Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, available at <<http://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/young-female-fighters-in-african-wars-conflict-and-its-consequences/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 22.

77 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) '*Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs*', thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp 48 and 61.

78 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) '*Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs*', thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 46.

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Some of the reasons that such an approach particularly disadvantaged women were:

- many women had fled from armed groups (self-demobilised) before the formal commencement of DDR programmes;
- many women used weapons from a communal source or used the kind of weapons that were not included in the eligibility criteria (such as machetes); and
- there was considerable evidence that commanders in all armed groups prevented women from participating in DDR programmes by controlling access to weapons (in order to be able to give them to others) and in order to maintain the official position of both government and opposition groups that there were no female combatants.<sup>79</sup>

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79 Ollek, Maya Oza, (2007) '*Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs*', thesis submitted as part of the degree of Masters of Arts in Political Science, Department of Political Science, McGill University, available at <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=18686&local\\_base=GEN01-MCG02](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=18686&local_base=GEN01-MCG02)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp 53-55.

An example of an inclusive eligibility criteria can be found in El Salvador. Following the end of the 12 year civil war in 1992 between government forces and the armed opposition group (FMLN), one of the defining features of the DDR programme was the eligibility criteria for the reintegration packages, which expressly included:

- women who carried weapons and were actively engaged in fighting;
- *colaboradoras* (women in FMLN-controlled areas that sustained the war effort by providing essential logistical and support services); and
- *tenedores* (other female supporters of the FMLN and internally displaced persons).<sup>80</sup>

Ultimately, it is a measure of the success of this approach that the number of female FMLN members demobilised (29 per cent of the total forces) was in line with the estimated number of female FMLN members (at the height of the conflict in the 1980s this was estimated to be approximately 30 per cent).<sup>81</sup>

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80 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) '*Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*', Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at [https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf) (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 2 and 9.<[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 2 and 9.

81 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) '*Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*', Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 11 and 14.

The tendency for the role of female combatants to be minimised or made ‘invisible’ in the aftermath of a conflict has been attributed to the continuation or reintroduction of traditional gender norms – which relegates women to the private sphere.<sup>82</sup> This compounds the legitimate fears of many women of the social stigma of being identified as a former combatant.<sup>83</sup> In addition to ensuring DDR programmes do not exclude women by definition or eligibility, it is also important to take into account the reluctance of women in many circumstances to present themselves for DDR programmes due to these fears.

Communication of the eligibility criteria and an emphasis on the availability of benefits to female combatants and dependants is also crucial to overcome any misconceptions that women are not eligible for DDR processes.<sup>84</sup>

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82 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘*Gender Conflict and Development*’, The World Bank (2005), available at <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1><<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 18; Shekhawat, Seema, ‘Introduction: Women in Conflict and Peace-making’, in 29. Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 1.

83 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, ‘*Gender Conflict and Development*’, The World Bank (2005), available at <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1><<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 18.

84 Bouta, Tsjear, (2005) ‘*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*’, Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 16.

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In Nepal it was observed that weak communication resulted in many women and children believing that they were not eligible and that reproductive health and child health medical services were not available at cantonment camps – even though they were (at least in part).<sup>85</sup> Dissemination of relevant information can take many forms and the involvement of the local communities can be of substantial assistance. For example, the Gender Advisor of the United Nations Mission to Liberia has noted that the involvement of local women’s organisations in public information campaigns proved to be very useful.<sup>86</sup>

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85 Colekessian, Ani (2009), ‘*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*’, Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender__A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 15.

86 Bouta, Tsjear, (2005) ‘*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*’, Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 16.

## 2.3 Cash payments in disarmament and demobilisation

Disarmament can take the form of a ‘reduction by command’ process, which would often be coordinated by peacekeepers or the military, or it can take the form of a ‘voluntary reduction’ process, and in many cases, disarmament strategies may use elements of both approaches.<sup>87</sup> Cash payments can be used in DDR programmes to incentivise voluntary disarmament or as part of the demobilisation package to assist former combatants in the early stages of their return to civilian life. While cash payments have obvious attractions, being direct and comparatively straightforward to administer, international experience suggests that cash payments are not an effective approach and have a particularly detrimental impact on female former combatants, dependants and women in receiving communities.<sup>88</sup> In past DDR programmes, cash payments have predominately been made available to male combatants, with women treated as ‘secondary beneficiaries’,<sup>89</sup> and there is evidence from the field that in some cases, men who have received such payments have not shared the payments with their dependents.<sup>90</sup>

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87 Small Arms Survey (2005), *Small Arms Survey 2005: Weapons at War*, available at <<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/by-type/yearbook/small-arms-survey-2005.html>> (last accessed 16 December 2015), p 280.

88 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women) (2004) ‘*Getting it Right and Doing it Right: Gender, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration*’, available at <[http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting\\_it\\_Right\\_Doing\\_it\\_Right.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting_it_Right_Doing_it_Right.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015), pp 6-7.

89 See for example the Angolan experience in Farr, Vanessa, (2003) ‘The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes’, *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 31.

90 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) ‘The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes’, *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 31; Bouta, Tsjard, (2005) ‘*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*’, Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 26.



Such schemes may also have the effect of further disempowering women who have been forcibly married to members of armed groups as they have no independent means of accessing resources.<sup>91</sup> Finally, even when women are eligible to receive cash payments, there can be practical difficulties if women do not have access to bank accounts.<sup>92</sup> Indeed in Eritrea, where cash payments formed part of the demobilisation payments for both men and women, there was a lack of consideration of different post-conflict gender roles and obligations, which affected how the payments were spent. For example, female former combatants who were single mothers often spent their payments on immediate needs for their children, while male recipients were able to invest the cash in longer-term interests such as buying land or farming equipment.<sup>93</sup>

Alternative programmes to incentivise voluntary disarmament (often described as ‘weapons for development’ schemes) offer educational or food assistance and are now considered a more inclusive approach.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, past experience demonstrates that actively including women in such initiatives can be beneficial to the overall success of the disarmament process.

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91 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) ‘The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes’, *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 32.

92 Rehn, Elisabeth and Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson, ‘*Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-building*’, UNIFEM, (2002), available at <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2002/1/women-war-peace-the-independent-experts-assessment-on-the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-women-and-women-s-role-in-peace-building-progress-of-the-world-s-women-2002-vol-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 116.

93 El Jack, Amani (2003), ‘*Gender and Armed Conflict Overview Report*’, BRIDGE – development and gender, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, available at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-armed-conflict> (last accessed 23 November 2015), p 30.

94 Williams, Kirsty (posted 29 June 2015), ‘*Women in armed groups are more than just an exotic novelty*’, The Institute for Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/women-in-armed-groups-are-more-than-just-an-exotic-novelty/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015).

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A commonly-cited example of such success is the ‘Weapons in Exchange for Development’ programme in Gramsch, Albania. While this was not a full DDR programme, it was the first successful weapons collection programme in Albania, during which approximately 6,000 weapons and 137 tonnes of ammunition were collected in exchange for community-based development and public works projects. The programme’s motto was “One Less Weapon, One More Life” and it was particularly notable for the important role that women played in its success.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in a gun buyback scheme in Argentina in 2008, although 95 per cent of small arms were owned by men, 50 per cent of arms collected were handed in by women. The scheme successfully collected 70,000 weapons and 450,000 rounds of ammunition, demonstrating the important role of women in disarmament even when no specific gendered approach was taken.<sup>96</sup> Other schemes to incentivise voluntary disarmament include a growing focus, in recent years, on changing community perceptions of weapons ownership with campaigns to raise public awareness of the risks of weapons ownership.<sup>97</sup>

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95 UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and International Action Network on Small Arms, (2010), ‘*Mainstreaming gender for the effective implementation of the UN PoA: Update of the 2006 CASA Guidelines*’, available at <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/gender/docs/Mainstreaming%20gender%20for%20effective%20implementation%20ofUN%20PoA%20-%20Updated%20guidelines%20-%20UNODARDB%20and%20IANSA%20-%20June%202010.pdf>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), p 15.

96 UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and International Action Network on Small Arms, (2010), ‘*Mainstreaming gender for the effective implementation of the UN PoA: Update of the 2006 CASA Guidelines*’, available at <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/gender/docs/Mainstreaming%20gender%20for%20effective%20implementation%20ofUN%20PoA%20-%20Updated%20guidelines%20-%20UNODARDB%20and%20IANSA%20-%20June%202010.pdf>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), p 16.

97 Small Arms Survey (2005), *Small Arms Survey 2005: Weapons at War*, available at <<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/by-type/yearbook/small-arms-survey-2005.html>> (last accessed 16 December 2015), p 280.

## 2.4 Cantonment facilities

Disarmament and demobilisation processes can take many forms: in some circumstances, there may be a substantial time period between disarmament and demobilisation, and in recent years it has become more common practice to take a more decentralised approach where possible. A more common approach now involves a DDR sensitisation campaign to armed groups over a long period of time before weapons are collected and former combatants assembled for demobilisation.<sup>98</sup> The IDDRS advises that where possible, it is preferable to carry out the process of demobilisation within the communities where former combatants will settle, rather than have separate residential cantonment sites.<sup>99</sup> However geography, the political climate or security concerns may render it practical or necessary for residential cantonment sites to be used – sometimes for both disarmament and demobilisation, and other times for demobilisation alone.

Where cantonment sites are used as part of the DDR process, a very practical concern for women wishing to participate in DDR processes is the need for such cantonment sites to be safe and suitable, given the risk of gender-based violence and the particular health and sanitation needs of women. Significant deterrents to attending or remaining at such cantonment camps are that such camps often lack proper security, hygiene facilities and medical care and the majority of attendees are almost always adult men.<sup>100</sup>

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98 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 4.10., para 8.2. This is, of course, not always the approach taken. For example, in Northern Ireland disarmament and demobilisation was a decentralised and piecemeal process which did not involve such formal cantonment facilities.

99 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 4.20, para 5.2

100 Schroeder, Emily, (2004) *'A Window of Opportunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Incorporating a Gender Perspective in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process'*, Pretoria, Institute of Security Studies, available at <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=124028>> (last accessed 19

Difficulties faced in past DDR exercises indicate that that the physical layout of cantonment camps should allow for either guards or separate quarters and that tailored sanitation and medical facilities should be provided.<sup>101</sup>

## **2.5 Demobilisation assistance**

Demobilisation involves both the physical process of separating former combatants from the environment and structures of the armed groups to which they belonged and the mental process of preparing former combatants for civilian life outside of those armed groups.<sup>102</sup> During this phase, former combatants typically receive a suite of demobilisation information and benefits, as well as medical services and psychological counselling. In order to ensure women stay engaged in the DDR process and receive appropriate and effective support, demobilisation assistance should take into account gender-based differences between men and women – including the particular circumstances of their engagement with armed forces, their experience of violence and sexual abuse, their marital status and whether they have children and the unique physical and psychological difficulties they may be suffering.

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November 2015), p 19.

101 Bouta, Tsjear, (2005) '*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*', Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 17.

102 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 4.20, Introduction

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Lessons learned from past experiences highlight the following specific areas where support for female former combatants is important and has often been lacking:

- the provision of gender-sensitive medical assistance, including gynaecological and maternal health specialists in demobilisation programmes;
- ensuring psychological support and trauma counselling is conscious of the complexities and specificities of women's experiences as former combatants; and
- designing and distributing assistance packs, reintegration information and personal effects (such as clothes and identification documents) which address gender-specific concerns of women and men, including social expectations, economic opportunities, political participation and risks and consequences of gender-based violence.<sup>103</sup>

An example of the later can be seen in Rwanda, where gender training was included as part of the three month demobilisation training received by male combatants, to inform them of changes in Rwandan society, such as the passage of new laws that gave women inheritance and property rights.<sup>104</sup>

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103 UN Women, '*Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls*' (2010), available at [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_in-straw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_in-straw_2010.pdf) (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 5.

104 El Jack, Amani (2003), '*Gender and Armed Conflict Overview Report*', BRIDGE – development and gender, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, available at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-armed-conflict> (last accessed 23 November 2015), p 30.

One of the purported goals of most demobilisation programmes is to assist former combatants in coming to terms with the loss of purpose, identity and community that many combatants find in armed groups. This process is, needless to say, a complex one which is difficult to measure. Chapter 1 of this paper highlights some of the gendered experiences and vulnerabilities for female combatants. These can present additional challenges in the demobilisation phase, including the fears and realities of being rejected or stigmatised by their civilian communities, responsibilities as a single parent and a return to more traditional gender roles in civilian life than they may have become accustomed to as combatants.

## 2.6 Reintegration

Reintegration of former combatants is the long-term process of transitioning from combatant to civilian life. The reintegration limb of DDR seeks to support former combatants and their receiving communities to address the many destabilising factors in that process, such as economic insecurity, social stigmatisation and psychological and physical trauma.<sup>105</sup> The goal of reintegration is to foster “sustainable income, social belonging and political participation”<sup>106</sup> for former combatants and in order to achieve these goals the context of the economic and social development processes and needs of the wider community should be taken into account. DDR practitioners have emphasised the need to develop reintegration programmes that are context-specific, including taking into account cultural norms, age, rural / urban settings, education levels, geography and ethnicity.<sup>107</sup> In Chapter 1 this paper considered the many different reasons that women may have for joining armed groups and these reasons should be taken into account to ensure that reintegration programmes go beyond “superficial aims” (such as ‘putting families back together under the same roof’) to be effective in promoting long-term reintegration.<sup>108</sup> Former female combatants face a number of unique challenges which can make the reintegration process even more difficult.

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105 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 4.30, para 3.

106 Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards, Module 4.30, p 7.

107 UN Women, ‘*Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls*’ (2010), available at <[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_instraw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_instraw_2010.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 3.

108 Specht, Irma and Atlee, Larry (2006), ‘The reintegration of teenage girls and young women’, *Intervention*, 4(3), 219-228, p 220.

A study of a regional reintegration programme across the Great Lakes region in Africa (comprising Uganda, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo and Burundi) reveals that former female combatants:

stand out as the most extensively and consistently disadvantaged segment (including all age and disability segments, male or female) of ex-combatants according to core indicators that reflect economic standing and social position in the community, and are at clear risk for economic and social isolation and marginalisation.<sup>109</sup>

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109 Rhea, Randolph Wallace, (2014), '*A Comparative Study of Ex-Combatant Reintegration in the African Great Lakes Region: Trajectories, Processes and Paradoxes*', The World Bank, available at <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/07/20367945/comparative-study-ex-combatant-reintegration-african-great-lakes-region-trajectories-processes-paradoxes>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), p 28.



a. **Economic reintegration**

Legal and institutional barriers arising from entrenched gender inequalities often make the reintegration process more challenging for former female combatants. In some countries women do not have the right to own or rent property or to inherit, or may not be recognised either legally or socially as capable of being the head of households.<sup>110</sup> In other countries, while the legal entitlements may exist, women who have been former combatants or former prisoners may find customary, legal and institutional barriers to economic reintegration – such as restrictions on getting jobs, obtaining credit, insurance or travelling abroad.<sup>111</sup> In Liberia, it was observed that female former combatants typically had lower levels of education than their male counterparts at the time of recruitment, which put these women at a disadvantage in the competition for training and jobs in the post-conflict period.<sup>112</sup>

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110 Farr, Vanessa, (undated) ‘*Gender-aware Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR): A Checklist*’, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women), available at <<http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@UNIFEM-Documents%20-%20A%20Checklist.pdf>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), pp 10-12.

111 Dwyer, Clare, (2012), ‘Expanding DDR: The Transformative Role of Former Prisoners in Community-Based Reintegration in Northern Ireland’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6, 274-295, p 291.

112 Specht, Irma and Atlee, Larry (2006), ‘The reintegration of teenage girls and young women’, *Intervention*, 4(3), 219-228, p 225.

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Even when economic reintegration benefits are designed in a gender-conscious way, there can be many pitfalls in implementation. For example, in El Salvador, the land transfer programme was a cornerstone of the reintegration process and designed to address the unequal distribution of land and assets amongst the rural poor – including male and female former combatants.<sup>113</sup> There were, however, a number of stumbling blocks in the implementation, including reports from former female combatants of widespread discrimination. Examples of such discrimination included women being classified into categories that exempted them from access to benefits, the allocation of land to families or husbands (despite explicit guidelines that land was to be allocated to individuals), distribution of poor quality land to women and the imposition of additional eligibility criteria which were more difficult for women to meet (such as literacy or documentation requirements).<sup>114</sup> A number of these problems were rectified, however, following protests and political interventions by women's organisations on the ground, such that, ultimately the number of female beneficiaries of the programme were proportionate to FMLN membership figures and female participation in DDR.<sup>115</sup>

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113 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) *'Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador'*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 16.

114 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) *'Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador'*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 17.

115 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) *'Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador'*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 17.

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Similarly, in Guatemala and Rwanda, a post-conflict reversion to traditional patriarchal relationships meant that women could not access and use land, despite changes in law which granted equal rights to ownership.<sup>116</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, the existence of 'traditional' gender norms has in many cases resulted in a social stigma being attached to former female combatants. Experience indicates that the social stigma associated with violence is exacerbated where sexuality is concerned, particularly when women are returning from the armed groups with children conceived during war.<sup>117</sup> Such stigmatisation will often have significant ramifications for the economic reintegration of former female combatants. In Nepal it has been observed that such women have effectively faced 'double discrimination' in the labour market, with employers' reluctance to employ former female combatants due to misconceptions about their sexuality, promiscuity or violent tendencies further restricting their access to work in a market which was already heavily discriminatory towards women.<sup>118</sup>

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116 Bouta, Tsjear, Frerks, George and Bannon, Ian, 'Gender Conflict and Development', The World Bank (2005), available at <<http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/0-8213-5968-1>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 102.

117 Azmi, Fazeeha, 'I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 209.

118 Colekessian, Ani (2009), 'Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process', Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender_A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 13.

These challenges to reintegration increase the risk of re-recruitment into armed forces and can compel women to relocate – often to urban areas – without the support of family and community, which makes them more vulnerable to human trafficking and prostitution.<sup>119</sup>

### **b. Social reintegration**

In addition to the economic hardships which DDR programmes should take into account, the process of social reintegration can potentially be an even greater challenge as it involves challenging traditional notions of gender roles and communities coming to terms with ex-combatants' past history of violence. Social reintegration refers to the processes through which former combatants “reshape their identity from soldier to civilian and weave themselves into the social fabric of society, both in their own eyes and the eyes of the community”.<sup>120</sup> In Sri Lanka, former Tamil Tiger combatants spoke of their concerns regarding their position within civilian communities, and noted that assumptions that they had been sexually abused – even when incorrect – were detrimental to their sense of belonging.<sup>121</sup>

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119 Colekessian, Ani (2009), ‘*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*’, Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender__A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 6.

120 Rhea, Randolph Wallace, (2014), ‘*A Comparative Study of Ex-Combatant Reintegration in the African Great Lakes Region: Trajectories, Processes and Paradoxes*’, The World Bank, available at <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/07/20367945/comparative-study-ex-combatant-reintegration-african-great-lakes-region-trajectories-processes-paradoxes>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), p 25.

121 Azmi, Fazeeha, ‘I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka’, in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 209.

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These women also noted that the surveillance activities of the government continued in peace time, disturbing their day-to-day lives and making them feel suspected all the time.<sup>122</sup> In Liberia, it was found that many women wished to hide their former roles as combatants to avoid social exclusion, even if that meant they had to forego the support provided by DDR programmes.<sup>123</sup>

Given the diversity of roles played by women in armed groups during conflicts, such women have often experienced a greater degree of empowerment and responsibility and have had the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge which may not otherwise have been available to them. Indeed, in some instances, armed groups (such as the People's Liberation Army in Nepal) had a formal gender equality and egalitarian platform which can be particularly attractive to women. This 'transgression' of traditional gender roles not only contributes to the social stigmatisation and difficulties in adapting to communities which have maintained or reverted to traditional gender roles in the aftermath of conflict (as discussed above), but is also often overlooked in the development of reintegration programmes, which often fail to recognise and build on these new skills and abilities.

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122 Azmi, Fazeeha, 'I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 210.

123 Specht, Irma and Atlee, Larry (2006), 'The reintegration of teenage girls and young women', *Intervention*, 4(3), 219-228, p 224.

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Vocational training programmes that focus on traditionally ‘female’ skills such as sewing or hairdressing may well be inappropriate for, and rejected by, former female combatants.<sup>124</sup> There is also a need to ensure educational and vocational programmes are actually suited to the job opportunities available in local communities – for example, one woman in Sri Lanka observed that the bridal dressing vocational training provided to her as part of the formal DDR programme did not give her the appropriate skills for civilian life as there was no market for bridal dressers in her community.<sup>125</sup> The difficulties associated with shifting gender roles are demonstrated in the experiences of former female FMLN combatants in El Salvador. While reintegration benefits such as agricultural training, scholarships and workshops were made available to both male and female combatants, some women reported that they were treated as social outcasts on their return and faced ridicule and criticism when attempting to participate in public life, while returning male combatants were treated as heroes.<sup>126</sup> On the whole, many women elected to return to the private sphere, resuming substantial domestic responsibilities, including caring for children, the elderly and the disabled.

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124 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 6; UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 179.

125 Azmi, Fazeha, ‘I Want My Wings Back to Fly in a New Sky: Stories of Female Ex-LTTE Combatants in Post-War Sri Lanka’, in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 212.

126 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) ‘*Adding Value: Women’s Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*’, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at [https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf) (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 18 and 19.

For some women this was attributable to a reversion to patriarchal traditions (the most common reason for low female participation in training and education programmes was a deference to the preference of husbands / partners who feared or distrusted their involvement), while for other women this was borne of necessity, with an estimated 80 per cent of demobilised women being responsible for children under the age of 12 and 29 per cent reporting that they were heads of households.<sup>127</sup>

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127 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) *Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at [https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf) (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 18 and 19.

## **CHAPTER 3: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE DDR PROGRAMMES**

Chapter 2 of this paper considers the ways in which various elements of DDR programmes can disadvantage female former combatants when gender issues are not properly taken into account. Underlying these challenges in design and implementation are a number of general practical themes, which are considered below in this chapter.

### **3.1 Staffing and training DDR practitioners**

A key lesson learned from past DDR experiences is that the staffing and training of DDR practitioners and peacekeepers should actively take into account the gender dimensions of conflict. UNSCR 1325 expressly addresses this issue, emphasising the importance of incorporating “a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations” and urging “the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component”.<sup>128</sup> Evidence from the field suggests that women are more likely to participate in DDR programmes with a greater female presence and more likely to speak to other women – particularly in relation to issues of sexual violence, reproductive health and other intimate matters.<sup>129</sup> The UN Global Study cites the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations that has reported “uniformed female personnel play a vital role in reaching out and gaining the trust of women and girls within local communities, understanding and detecting their unique protection needs and tailoring the responses of peace

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128 UNSCR 1325, Article 5.

129 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) ‘The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes’, *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 33.

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operations”.<sup>130</sup> Indeed peacekeeping commanders have noted that female military officers have “a special comparative advantage in house and body searches, interacting with survivors of gender-based violence, working in women’s prisons, and screening women in disarmament and demobilization sites”.<sup>131</sup>

Despite this, only a small number of peacekeepers around the globe are women and even fewer are experts on DDR.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, simply increasing the numbers of women working in the field is not sufficient to mainstream gender; experience shows that both men and women need appropriate training in gender issues. This was demonstrated in El Salvador where senior-level FMLN women were actively involved in all levels of negotiations, including in the technical negotiations regarding DDR processes.<sup>133</sup>

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130 UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 136.

131 UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 141.

132 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women) (2004) ‘*Getting it Right and Doing it Right: Gender, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration*’, available at <[http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUUpload/Members/Documents/15@Getting\\_it\\_Right\\_Doing\\_it\\_Right.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUUpload/Members/Documents/15@Getting_it_Right_Doing_it_Right.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015), p 6; see also UN Women (2015), ‘*Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*’, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 139.

133 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) ‘*Adding Value: Women’s Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*’, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 12 and 15.

These women observed, however, that they did not take into account the specific needs of women or other gender issues in the negotiations; rather they simply acted as leaders of their respective parties and in hindsight, have come to regret their lack of gender awareness<sup>134</sup>. The UN Global Study observes that there has been a proliferation in the development of gender training materials in recent years, but a more systematic approach to implementation of such training and building of good practice is required.<sup>135</sup>

### **3.2 Data collection and consultation**

Another key lesson learned from recent international experiences is that DDR planning and design should be informed by more extensive data collection and participatory needs assessment which is disaggregated by gender to ensure that DDR programmes target the actual demographic make-up of the relevant armed groups.<sup>136</sup>

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134 Conaway, Camille Pampell and Martínez, Salomé, (2004) *Adding Value: Women's Contributions to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at <[https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14\\_adding\\_value\\_women\\_s\\_contributions\\_to\\_reintegration\\_and\\_reconstruction\\_in\\_el\\_salvador.pdf](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/14_adding_value_women_s_contributions_to_reintegration_and_reconstruction_in_el_salvador.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), pp 12 and 15.

135 UN Women (2015), *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, available at <<http://wps.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>> (last accessed 25 November 2015), p 140.

136 Bouta, Tsjeard, (2005) *Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015); United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women) (2004) *Getting it Right and Doing it Right: Gender, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration*, available at <[http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting\\_it\\_Right\\_Doing\\_it\\_Right.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting_it_Right_Doing_it_Right.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015).

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Experience has demonstrated that while security concerns and resources constraints often limit the time spent of collecting relevant data before DDR programmes are rolled out, it is an essential step in the development of an effective and gender-sensitive DDR programme.

It is clear that many of the difficulties in design and implementation of gender-sensitive DDR programmes have been rooted in an inadequate understanding of the composition on armed groups, individual and community experiences before, during and after conflicts and the specific circumstances, motivations and needs of former combatants. For example, following the Liberian civil war which ended in 2003, the main cause of funding shortfalls for the DDR programme was a much greater number of former combatants going through DDR than originally estimated.<sup>137</sup> This under-estimation was greater for female combatants than for male combatants – with the original estimate of eligible women being only 9 per cent of the actual number of women that ultimately went through the DDR programme (for men, this figure was 35 per cent).<sup>138</sup> This meant that benefits and programmes targeted specifically at women were particularly underfunded.

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137 Christoffersen, Karin (2010), 'Disarming and Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: A Case Study in Gender Mainstreaming of DDR in Liberia', (masters thesis), University of Oslo, available at <<https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/12973>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), p 68.

138 Christoffersen, Karin (2010), 'Disarming and Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: A Case Study in Gender Mainstreaming of DDR in Liberia', (masters thesis), University of Oslo, available at <<https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/12973>> (last accessed 10 December 2015), pp 68-69.

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In addition, experience indicates that robust consultation with community groups and women's organisations can be particularly beneficial as field experience has shown that women often have good understanding of the role of weapons in their community as "[t]hey are in charge of households and they know where the weapons are."<sup>139</sup> DDR practitioners have recommended that DDR programmes start with a participatory needs assessment process which incorporates the input of women and some suggest that the cantonment period (if cantonments are used in a particular programme) could be used as the opportunity to carry out such assessments.<sup>140</sup>

### 3.3 Flexibility

The design of DDR programmes should take into account all relevant data and then be made adaptable to the differing circumstances of former combatants. As noted in Chapter 1, DDR is not always a linear process and this is especially true for female former combatants given that they are less likely to have access to weapons for disarmament and may have left armed groups of their own accord following a ceasefire. Accordingly it may be appropriate to allow multiple entry points to DDR, such as access to reintegration benefits without being required to have first disarmed and demobilised.<sup>141</sup>

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139 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) 'The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes', *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 33.

140 UN Women, 'Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls' (2010), available at [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_instraw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_instraw_2010.pdf) (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 7.

141 Specht, Irma and Atlee, Larry (2006), 'The reintegration of teenage girls and young women', *Intervention*, 4(3), 219-228, p 223.

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Lessons learned from past practice have emphasised that particularly important aspects to take into account for former female combatants include the age of beneficiaries, rural or urban contexts, status, ethnicity and the time served and responsibilities held while with armed groups.<sup>142</sup> For example, it has been noted that sexual violence impacts on women of different ages differently given the social emphasis on purity in some communities.<sup>143</sup>

### **3.4 Community-based approaches to reintegration**

Reintegration programmes should take into account the particular needs, concerns and resources of receiving communities and there are a variety of ways in which that can be done. A common challenge for reintegration programmes is to be aware of the risk that such programmes are seen to be ‘rewarding’ perpetrators of violence, while receiving communities receive nothing. This can be exacerbated for women, given the social stigma which is often associated with being identified as a female combatant.

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142 UN Women, *Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls* (2010), available at <[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_in-straw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_in-straw_2010.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 3.

143 UN Women, *Virtual Discussion on Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration – Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls* (2010), available at <[http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps\\_onlinediscussions\\_in-straw\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/image/Initiatives/wps_onlinediscussions_in-straw_2010.pdf)> (last accessed 8 December 2015), p 3.

Accordingly, it may be appropriate to link individual-based benefits to community development projects such as community education programmes, reconstruction of local infrastructure and income-generating projects<sup>144</sup> ensuring that these programmes are aimed equally at men and women.<sup>145</sup>

Further, it may be useful to adopt or adapt local traditions in order to address the social stigma associated with former female combatants. For example, research has found that purification / cleansing rituals were successfully used in Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique to assist some former female combatants – particularly girls – in the healing and reintegration process.<sup>146</sup> It is however, important to consider the appropriateness of using such traditions carefully in any particular community, as they may have the effect of reinforcing traditional gender inequalities.

Community organisations and civil society have also proven to be very important to the reintegration process. In many post-conflict settings, informal and formal networks, such as women's and veterans' groups have played a significant role. For example, in both Colombia and El Salvador, a number of organisations for female ex-combatants were established before the formal peace negotiations commenced, and have since worked together and in their own regions to support their members.

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144 Bouta, Tsjear, (2005) '*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*', Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), pp 18-19.

145 Farr, Vanessa, (2003) 'The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes', *Disarmament Forum: Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 4, 25-35, p 33.

146 Bouta, Tsjear, (2005) '*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*', Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 20.

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Activities have included peer exchanges on organisational agendas and development of gender consciousness, establishing historic memory projects which provide women with safe spaces to exchange conflict experiences, academic research and documentaries and developing income-generating projects which are linked to civic participation.<sup>147</sup> These and other experiences suggest that there is real benefit in cultivating such community-based organisations, although care must be taken to ensure that such groups are not perceived as threats to, or isolated from, host communities.<sup>148</sup>

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147 Ortega, Luisa Maria Dietrich, 'Untapped Resources for Peace: A Comparative Study of Women's Organisations of Guerrilla Ex-Combatants in Colombia and El Salvador', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp 245-246.

148 Dahal, Swechchha, 'Challenging the Boundaries: The Narratives of the Female Ex-Combatants in Nepal', in Shekhawat, Seema (ed), *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p 195; see also Bouta, Tsjard, (2005) 'Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy', Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 20.

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### 3.5 Communication

In order to overcome the social stigma associated with identifying as a former combatant and as well as common community misperceptions that DDR programmes are not available to women, lessons from past DDR programmes recommend that robust and specifically targeted awareness raising and information campaigns are employed.<sup>149</sup> For example, in Nepal it was discovered that weak communication resulted in many women and children not understanding that they were eligible for DDR or that gender-specific services and support were available at cantonment facilities.<sup>150</sup>

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149 Bouta, Tsjard, (2005) '*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*', Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 16.

150 Colekessian, Ani (2009), '*Reintegrating Gender: A Gendered Analysis of the Nepali Rehabilitation Process*', Working paper, Gender Peace and Security Series, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, available at <[http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating\\_Gender\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Nepali\\_Rehabilitation\\_Process.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4494-v-Reintegrating_Gender_A_Gendered_Analysis_of_the_Nepali_Rehabilitation_Process.pdf)> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 15.

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Experiences in Colombia suggest that women should be involved in designing these campaigns to ensure that they feature women, use appropriate and sensitive language and are distributed as effectively as possible.<sup>151</sup> One key lesson learned was that “the most effective reintegration programs build upon the reasons why individuals joined fighting forces and the experiences they gained as members”<sup>152</sup> and accordingly, information campaigns should highlight these linkages.

Finally, communication campaigns (such as television or radio advertisements, interviews and panel discussions) can also be used to raise awareness within receiving communities of the experiences of former combatants and combat misperceptions such as the assumptions that former female combatants are highly promiscuous or violent or carry HIV/AIDs.<sup>153</sup>

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151 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 6.

152 O’Neill, Jacqueline, (2015) ‘*Engaging Women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Insights from Colombia*’, The Institute of Inclusive Security, available at <<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/engaging-women-in-disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-insights-for-colombia/>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 6.

153 Bouta, Tsjard, (2005) ‘*Gender and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration: Building Blocks for Dutch Policy*’, Netherlands Institute of International Relations “Clingendael”, available at <<http://www.oecd.org/derec/netherlands/35112187.pdf>> (last accessed 19 November 2015), p 19.

### **3.6 Funding DDR programmes**

Finally, one of the key constraints on implementing the practical lessons learned discussed above, is limitations on funding and resources – both in terms of quantity, decision-making capacity of implementing agencies and timing. In the context of DDR, constraints in funding can lead to a preference for short-term approaches in order to take advantage of international interest in the immediate afterglow of a successfully concluded peace agreement and justify spending to donors. For example, in Aceh, the reintegration agency elected to make cash payments to all beneficiaries in lieu of long-term economic development projects, due to time constraints and the continued central control over spending decisions.<sup>154</sup>

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154 Frödin, Lina, 'The challenges of reintegration in Aceh', (2008), *Accord*, 20, available at <<http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/challenges-reintegration-aceh>> (last accessed 11 December 2015), p 56.

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Given that the reintegration elements of DDR are typically longer-term and more complex to implement, reintegration programmes are the most likely to suffer from funding shortfalls. One of the key lessons learned from the recent and ongoing DDR programmes in Darfur is that funding for DDR should be secured for all phases of DDR – including reintegration – before commencing disarmament, to avoid the risk of the whole programme failing.<sup>155</sup> In addition to the general constraints on funding, UNIFEM (now UN Women) has observed that gender issues in DDR are even more under-resourced, and advises that peacekeeping agencies should allocate specific elements of their budgets to collecting data on gender issues, implementing specific programmes for female combatants and providing gender training for peacekeepers.<sup>156</sup>

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155 Elzarov, Zurab (posted 7 May 2015), 'DDR in Darfur: Progress, Challenges and Outlook', Security Sector Reform Resource Centre, available at <<http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2015/05/07/ddr-in-darfur-progress-challenges-and-outlook/>> (last accessed 17 December 2015).

156 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now, UN Women) (2004) '*Getting it Right and Doing it Right: Gender, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration*', available at <[http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting\\_it\\_Right\\_Doing\\_it\\_Right.pdf](http://www.poa-iss.org/CASAUplod/Members/Documents/15@Getting_it_Right_Doing_it_Right.pdf)> (last accessed 7 December 2015), p 5.

## CONCLUSION

It is widely accepted that men and women experience armed conflict and the transition to peace in different ways and gender norms are highly significant in influencing the ways in which women participate in armed conflict and post-conflict peace processes, including:

- in the design and implementation of peace processes and DDR programmes in particular, traditional notions of gender roles have obscured women's active participation;
- women's actual roles in armed forces can both subvert and reinforce such gender expectations; and
- women continue to suffer as victims of gender-based violence, before, during and after conflict.

In order to fully achieve the fundamental purpose of DDR of promoting security and stability by supporting economic and social recovery in a post-conflict setting, there is a need to ensure that such gender-related issues are taken into account in the design and implementation of DDR programmes. Recent DDR experiences demonstrate a variety of ways in which taking a gender-blind approach disadvantages former female combatants and hinders the realisation of this fundamental purpose. Challenges for practitioners include:

- ensuring that women and girls are not excluded from access to DDR programmes, either directly or indirectly;
- ensuring that DDR programmes provide for women's specific needs, including in areas of security, health, child care and education/training; and
- addressing the stigma often associated with former female combatants which can make access to DDR and long-term reintegration much more difficult for such women.

Some of the key practical themes that emerge from past experiences in incorporating former female combatants into DDR processes include:

- more female peacekeepers and DDR practitioners are required and all peacekeepers and DDR practitioners should receive specific gender training;
- being better informed about the demographics of armed groups, and in particular, the extent of women's participation, results in better-designed programmes;
- DDR programmes should be sufficiently flexible so that the benefits and opportunities available under such programmes are accessible to *all* former combatants (not only those who possess weapons following the end of a conflict);
- DDR programmes should be targeted at both the community-level and the individual-level as this can contribute to more sustainable long-term reintegration;
- widespread communication of the criteria for eligibility for DDR and the support and benefits to be provided are necessary to combat misperceptions and misinformation; and
- insufficient funding and resources can underpin many of the difficulties DDR practitioners face in implementing effective DDR programmes, and this lack of funds can have a disproportionate effect on gender mainstreaming efforts.

As awareness grows within the international community of the importance of including women – and particularly female former combatants – in post-conflict peacebuilding processes, there are many practical lessons from past international experiences which can guide the design and implementation of future DDR programmes that are successful and inclusive.

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1. DPI Working Paper, '*DDR and the Complexity of Contemporary Conflict*', (DPI, London, October 2012), available at <<http://www.democraticprogress.org/publications/ddr-and-the-complexity-of-contemporary-conflict/>> (last accessed 15 December 2015)
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## DPI Board Members

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**Kerim Yildiz (Director)**, Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in International Human Rights Law and minority rights, and has written extensively on international Human Rights mechanisms and International Humanitarian Law. Kerim is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011.



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**Priscilla Hayner:** Co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organizations.



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**Antonia Potter**, Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, MediatEUR, and Terre des Hommes.



**Jacki Muirhead**, Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

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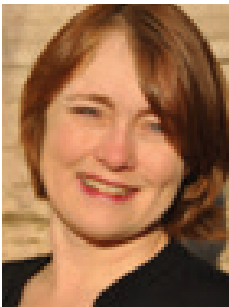
### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.



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Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. Areas of focus include Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format.



**Prof. Christine Bell:** Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.



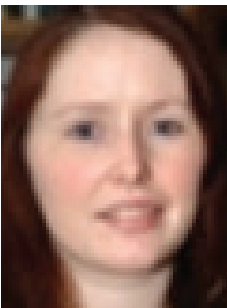
**Cengiz Çandar:** Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.



**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.



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**Martin Griffiths:** Former Deputy Head, Kofi Annan's UN Mission to Syria. Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.



**Avila Kilmurray:** A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.



**Prof. Ram Manikkalingam:** Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.





**Bejan Matur:** Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).



**Monica McWilliams:** Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005 2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.



**Jonathan Powell:** Jonathan Powell is founder and CEO of Inter Mediate, an NGO devoted to conflict resolution working in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Jonathan was Chief of Staff to Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and from 1997 was also Chief British Negotiator on Northern Ireland. From 1978-79 he was a broadcast journalist with the BBC and Granada TV and from 1979 to 1994 a British Diplomat.



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**Prof. Dr. Mithat Sancar:** Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on constitutional citizenship and transitional justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



**Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokuş:** Professor of Law at the University of Kocaeli. She is a widely published expert in the areas of constitutional law and human rights law, and is a practitioner in the European Court of Human Rights.



**David Reddaway:** He now works as an adviser, board member and consultant in the private and university sectors. He was previously British Ambassador to Turkey and to Ireland; High Commissioner to Canada; UK Special Representative for Afghanistan; and Charge d’Affaires in Iran, where he had first worked during the Iranian Revolution. He also served in Argentina; India; and Spain. He was a Fellow at Harvard University and a volunteer teacher in Ethiopia. He read History at Cambridge, and Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.



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