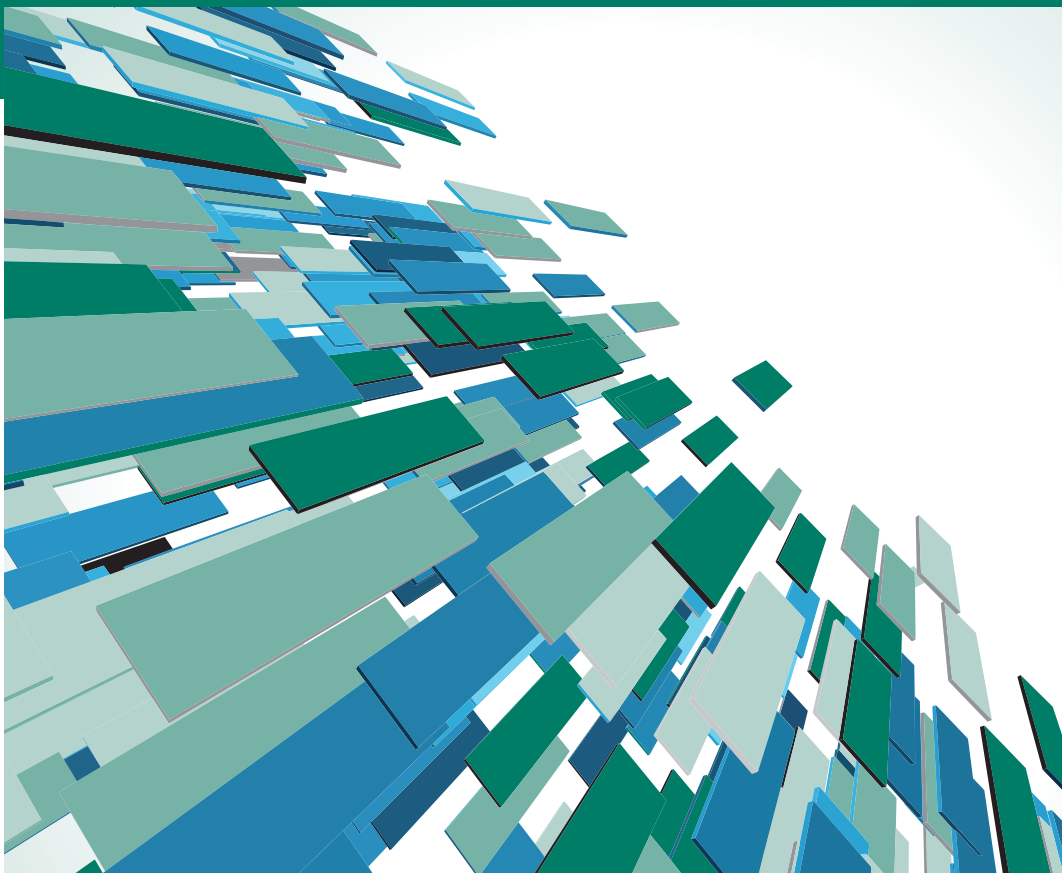
Peacemaker's Toolkit

MANAGING FIGHTING FORCES

DDR in Peace Processes

Kelvin Ong



Managing Fighting Forces

MANAGING FIGHTING FORCES

PRENEGOTIATION PHASE

STEP 1: PREPARE TO ENGAGE

- DDR is only one security instrument
- DDR is a combatant focused program
- DDR programs need achievable parameters
- DDR programs meet only limited expectations
- DDR programs have potentially destabilizing consequences
- DDR definitions are only a guide

STEP 2: ASSESS THE FIGHTING FORCES

- Understand the strategic objectives of the conflict parties
- Identify and include key armed groups
- Analyze characteristics of the fighting forces
- Map the evolution of the fighting forces
- Assess reliance on external support
- Understand weapons ownership and other cultural cues

STEP 3: DETERMINE A MEDIATION APPROACH AND STRATEGY

- Adopt an approach of "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed"
- Find credible and appropriate interlocutors
- Identify methods of contacting the fighting forces
- Facilitate safe passage and movement for negotiators
- Consider women's roles
- Adopt a problem-solving approach
- Minimize asymmetry between parties
- Uphold international law
- Commence preliminary discussions

STEP 4: LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR DDR NEGOTIATIONS

- Avoid DDR as a precondition for talks
- Link DDR to other transitional security arrangements
- Include key armed groups in framework agreements

QUICK REFERENCE

NEGOTIATION PHASE

STEP 5: CONDUCT AND MANAGE THE NEGOTIATIONS

- Negotiate key DDR details
- Common negotiated outcomes on DDR
- Anticipate and manage the negotiation techniques of fighting forces
- Sell DDR commitments to the troops

STEP 6: LINK DDR TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PEACE PROCESS

- Cease-fire arrangements
- Political arrangements
- Economic reintegration
- Security sector reform

STEP 7: PUT DDR IN THE PEACE AGREEMENT

- Craft a clear vision, approach, and desired outcome for the DDR program
- Detail who and what are covered by the DDR program
- Establish realistic timelines
- Set out the institutional structures needed to plan and implement DDR

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

STEP 8: FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION

- Include implementers in the negotiation phase
- Develop a mediation and facilitation strategy to support implementation
- Address implementation of key political provisions before starting DDR
- Anticipate and resolve DDR specific problems
- Build local capacity for mediation and conflict resolution

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Build trust but understand that achieving absolute trust may not be possible
- Sensitize and educate parties on DDR issues
- Be context relevant
- Be flexible
- Make realistic assumptions
- Focus on implementation
- Ensure adequate and timely resources for all dimensions of the program

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Contents

Managing Fighting Forces: Quick Reference ii

Introduction 5

Step 1: Prepare to Engage 11

Step 2: Assess the Fighting Forces 15

Step 3: Determine a Mediation Approach and Strategy 23

Step 4: Lay the Groundwork for DDR Negotiations 35

Step 5: Conduct and Manage the Negotiations 39

Step 6: Link DDR to Other Aspects of the Peace Process 47

Step 7: Put DDR in the Peace Agreement 55

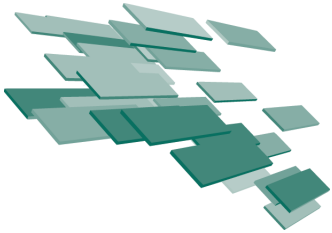
Step 8: Facilitate Implementation 59

Conclusions: General Principles 65

Notes 69

Acknowledgments 70

About the Author 70



Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, mediated settlements of intrastate conflicts, codified in peace agreements, have included the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of fighting forces. In these peace processes, mediators have been confronted with intense negotiations between governments and rebel fighting forces to control, disband, or downsize their respective fighting forces; destroy collected armaments and munitions; and provide transitional support for demobilized fighters. Transitional security provisions have built confidence between former belligerents and prevented the easy resumption of armed conflict. Equally important, the DDR of fighting forces has provided a conducive environment for the implementation of vital aspects of a peace accord, such as the holding of elections; the (re)establishment of governmental authority and services; the return of displaced populations; the reconstruction of markets and infrastructure; and societal reconciliation. In turn, satisfactory resolution of key conflict issues, such as political power sharing, constitutional reform, wealth sharing, and redress for perpetrated crimes, have facilitated the willingness of former conflict parties to submit their forces to DDR programs. Thus, DDR programs have become central to the overall success of a peace process.

Yet there appears to be a knowledge deficit in terms of how to manage the political dimensions of DDR in a mediation process. For mediators, this shortage has resulted in a compromised ability to manage the misperceptions about and fears of DDR held by armed groups and their negotiating representatives. Furthermore, mediators have sometimes failed to fully assess the interests and positions of negotiating parties and accurately identify the strategies and tactics conflict parties employ to avoid disarming and demobilizing their fighting forces. An overtly programmatic approach—as opposed to a political one—by the mediator, coupled with unrealistic planning assumptions, have further compromised

the viability of DDR programs. For their part, conflict parties plagued by a lack of knowledge of this complex issue are insecure about negotiating DDR issues. Fearful of making inadvertent concessions on their military capability, negotiating parties either play it safe by refusing to negotiate the postconflict management of their fighting forces or adopt hard-line positions on DDR. Equally problematic, the lack of understanding of DDR issues has impeded the ability of negotiators to communicate the objectives of a DDR program to armed groups ("fighting forces" and "armed groups" are used synonymously in this handbook).

This handbook provides guidance on the mediation and negotiation aspects of DDR and proposes ways for mediators to establish appropriate linkages between DDR and other aspects of a peace process. Although special attention is given to the mediation phase of the peace process, the need for continued facilitation and mediation throughout the implementation phase is also emphasized. This handbook provides insights on how DDR is understood by armed groups and the strategies (or countermeasures) that they might adopt to delay, avoid, or manipulate the DDR program for political, economic, or security gains.

This handbook is intended for a wide range of mediators who play a role in addressing DDR issues in peace processes. External third-party mediators from the United Nations, member states, and regional and subregional organizations who continue to grapple with DDR issues are the primary audience. Different thematic and process experts with mediation teams who are responsible for designing the mediation process and substantive issues such as transitional political arrangements, amnesty provisions, transitional justice, and reconciliation will also benefit from reading this handbook. It is particularly important for team members, working on these different issues, to have a common understanding of DDR and the overall mediation strategy toward it. This awareness will help avoid incoherence within the mediation effort itself; such incoherence can jeopardize the overall mediation strategy on DDR and the broader peace process.

Another audience for this handbook is internal mediators (e.g., local leaders or representatives from religious groups) and mediators from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These mediators are often the first to respond to a conflict but may mediate with less international support. For this category of mediators, it is worth pointing out that the

United Nations has established a Mediation Support Unit (and its Standby Team of Mediation Experts), which provides advisory support on DDR and other issues negotiated in a peace process.

The information provided in this handbook is pertinent to the plethora of advocacy groups working on issues such as child protection, gender concerns, and human rights. Advocacy groups, which perform critical roles alongside a mediation process, can benefit from a better understanding of the political and security perspectives of parties in a conflict. This knowledge can help advocacy entities and mediation teams better connect their respective efforts to attain a more coherent conflict management and resolution strategy. Issues that are particularly amenable to a close connection between advocacy groups and mediators are the early demobilization of child soldiers, the release of prisoners, the release of abducted and forcibly conscripted fighters, and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Although these are important goals in their own right, agreement on these issues early in a mediation process has the potential to enhance confidence between negotiating parties. Where appropriate, mediators can and should use their influence to educate negotiating parties and support adherence to international law and international humanitarian law. When these issues are prematurely and/or poorly managed, the peace process can be set back.

Regardless of its precise form, a mediation process has three major phases: the preparation and prenegotiation phase, the negotiation phase, and the implementation phase. These phases are neither linear nor strictly sequential in nature, nor do they contain predetermined time frames. Mediators and conflict parties constantly adjust their approaches and strategies throughout these phases on both the procedural and the substantive dimensions of the peace process, making strict adherence to templates for DDR negotiations unwise and unrealistic.

With these caveats in mind, this handbook lays out eight steps that mediators can take as they address DDR issues. The first four steps broadly correspond to the prenegotiation phase, the next three to the negotiation phase, and the last to the implementation phase.

- *Step 1: Prepare to engage.* Mediators should familiarize themselves (and their teams) with a basic knowledge of DDR. Specific attention should be given to understanding the aims of DDR in a peace process, as well as

its potential and its limits in managing fighting forces and their weaponry.

- *Step 2: Assess the fighting forces.* Mediators should assess the nature of the conflict and conflict parties. This assessment provides important information about the strategic objective(s) of the negotiating parties, as well as the nature and composition of their fighting forces; the resulting information is vital to the formulation of an effective mediation strategy.
- *Step 3: Determine a mediation approach and strategy.* Mediators should organize an effective mediation strategy. Mediation and negotiation techniques that apply to DDR issues, such as timing DDR negotiations, establishing contact with credible interlocutors, and dealing with power asymmetry between negotiating parties, are covered in this step.
- *Step 4: Lay the groundwork for DDR negotiations.* Mediators should incorporate DDR in framework agreements signed in the prenegotiation phase. Framework agreements should avoid insisting on DDR as a precondition for substantive negotiations but should include all relevant armed actors and establish appropriate linkages to other aspects of security arrangements.
- *Step 5: Conduct and manage the negotiations.* Mediators should cover DDR issues throughout negotiations to manage and guide conflict parties through the mediation process and help parties overcome any reluctance to address DDR issues.
- *Step 6: Link DDR to other aspects of the peace process.* Mediators should establish linkages between DDR and related aspects of the peace process, understanding that DDR cannot be addressed in isolation. Mediators must carefully consider how negotiations on DDR issues relate to, and impact upon, negotiations on cease-fire arrangements, security sector reform, political arrangements, reconciliation, and reintegration issues.
- *Step 7: Put DDR in the peace agreement.* Mediators should clearly articulate the agreed-upon vision, approach, and desired outcome for the DDR program in the peace agreement.
- *Step 8: Facilitate implementation.* Mediators should develop mediation and facilitation strategies to support the implementation of the DDR program.

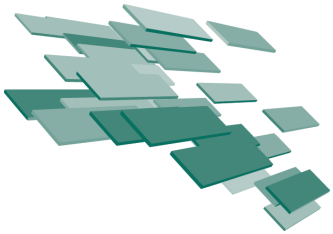
The Peacemaker's Toolkit

This handbook is part of the series *The Peacemaker's Toolkit,* which is being published by the United States Institute of Peace. The first in the series, *Managing a Mediation Process* by Amy L. Smith and David R. Smock, offers, as its title indicates, an overview of the mediation process, and may be read in conjunction with *Managing Public Information in a Mediation Process.*

For almost thirty years, the United States Institute of Peace has supported the work of mediators through research, training programs, workshops, and publications designed to discover and disseminate the keys to effective mediation. The Institute—mandated by the U.S. Congress to help prevent, manage, and resolve international conflict through nonviolent means—conceived *The Peacemaker's Toolkit* as a way of combining its accumulated expertise with that of other organizations active in the field of mediation. Most publications in the series are produced jointly by the Institute and a partner organization. All publications are carefully reviewed before publication by highly experienced mediators to ensure that the final product will be a useful and reliable resource for practitioners.

The Online Version

All the handbooks in *The Peacemaker's Toolkit* are available online and can be downloaded at www.usip.org. In the case of some handbooks, the online version presents not only the text of the handbook but also connects readers to a vast web of information. Links in the online version give readers immediate access to a considerable variety of publications, news reports, directories, and other sources of data regarding ongoing mediation initiatives, case studies, theoretical frameworks, and education and training. These links enable the online Toolkit to serve as a "you are here" map to the larger literature on mediation.



STEP 1

Prepare to Engage

Mediators should be familiar with the concept and objectives of DDR. The key contribution of a DDR program is its ability to open political and security space for other (unarmed) actors to participate in the postconflict political process. By doing so, a DDR program establishes an environment in which former conflict parties can make progress on more difficult political fronts, in particular power sharing and constitutional reform. Although a DDR program can make critical contributions to security and stability in postconflict situations, it focuses on achieving limited objectives and is imperfect in its implementation. Nevertheless, there is tremendous flexibility in DDR's terminology and application and, if it is managed properly, a DDR program can improve the prospects for a lasting peace. In this regard, six dimensions of DDR are particularly important for mediators to understand.

DDR Is Only One Security Instrument

DDR is only one security instrument for conflict parties to use to manage their fighting forces. Others include cease-fire arrangements, the early demobilization of child soldiers, priority release of abducted and forcibly recruited combatants, co-option of armed opposition groups, disbandment of fighting forces (sometimes without support packages), integration into existing security forces, and broader security sector reform (SSR). Depending on the conflict, some or all of these activities may be necessary, and many are undertaken within the political and security framework established at peace talks by the negotiating parties. Other related programs that address the collection of weapons at the community level and societal reconciliation may be established outside the framework of the peace agreement. The selection of activities should be informed by the objectives of the mediator and the conflict parties. For example, although cease-fire

arrangements may be a temporary measure to halt the fighting between armed groups, they are unlikely to fully demilitarize any given situation—more comprehensive and longer-term measures are required.

DDR Is a Combatant-Focused Program

DDR is largely a combatant-focused program, which is inextricably linked to issues of power and politics. DDR efforts have four major goals: (1) to improve the overall security situation (through the control and removal of weaponry) in a country; (2) to dismantle unit structures and loyalties of nonstatutory forces to prevent rapid regrouping; (3) to provide alternative livelihood opportunities through limited economic and social support; and (4) to contribute to the process of societal reconciliation. If a DDR program is attempted, mediators should strive for these goals while preserving flexibly on the terminology, precise sequencing, and nature of each of the program's constituent elements.

DDR Programs Need Achievable Parameters

Throughout the last two decades, the focus of DDR has been expanded gradually to include a wide array of unachievable objectives. In some cases, there has been a tendency to overemphasize the poverty reduction and social cohesion dimensions of a DDR program. In reality, economic reintegration programs that were designed to retrain and revitalize former fighters into productive members of society often fell short of goals in terms of ideas, funding, and options. Social reintegration programs designed to achieve forgiveness, reconciliation, and societal harmony were also easier to espouse at the peace table than to implement. In some circumstances, mediators hoped that DDR programs would guarantee community security by helping fighting forces put aside their weapons. Proponents of these schools of thought placed their faith in the full-fledged and rapid transformation of former belligerents into brethren as soon as a peace deal was struck. Many of these goals, while noble, have not been attained. Mediators are well-advised to set truly achievable and realistic objectives for a DDR program.

DDR Programs Can Meet Only Limited Expectations

DDR programs are imperfect. Disarmament programs rarely, if ever, collect all—or even the most serviceable—weapons in circulation.

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