



## VIRTUAL DISCUSSION ON **GENDER AND DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION & REINTEGRATION**

Reintegrating Female Ex-Combatants: Good practices and lessons learned  
in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of women and girls

### **Week Two Summary on Good Practices and Lessons Learned**

UN-INSTRAW would like to thank all participants who have contributed to the first and second week of discussion. Your collective contributions have provided all of us with the necessary background to discuss indicators and recommendations during week three of the virtual dialogue, as we continue to make connections and synergies within the network. Following is a summary of comments, including main points made during the discussions and a full-length review of specific comments made during week two.

#### **Week Two of the virtual discussion aimed to address the following questions:**

1. How have adopted measures (i.e. vocational training, financial reimbursement, psycho-social support, community support) addressed or failed to address the specific needs of women and girls in reintegration processes?
2. How has on work on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (including through National Action Plans) incorporated gender and DDR?
3. If applicable, how has the increased participation of women in programme planning supported or failed to support gender-aware reintegration?
4. How do reintegration processes consider or fail to consider the particular roles (traditional and transformed) of women and girls before, during and post-conflict?

#### **Week Two: Main points on the specific roles and needs of female ex-combatants**

- Involving communities and being transparent about the intent of DDR processes is an important part of effective DDR programmes.
- Issues such as stigmas and gender, ethnicity, age and illiteracy must be addressed in analysis and programming.
- The weapon exchange model fails to adequately target intended beneficiaries.
- Time restraints for DDR planning and programming pose challenges to efficacy.
- Vocational training must address the specific needs of different women.
- UNSCR 1325 can be a useful entry point for gender-sensitive DDR.
- Supporting the formation of women's groups is an effective way to identify the needs of women as well as to create provisions for ownership and empowerment.
- The provision of services that address emotional trauma and reproductive health are vital.

#### **Week Two: Summary of comments made**

##### **Adopted Measures**

Segueing into week two of the discussion on gender and DDR, *drbunmi* (ERCC Medical Services) reiterated the need to address specific emotional trauma experienced by female ex-combatants, with special regard to HIV/AIDS transmission. To address this,

she suggested the formation of women's groups to share mutual experiences, in which emotional issues are discussed and dealt with.

*PamDeLargy* (UNFPA HQ) offered insight into the discussion with a case example of the Liberian DDR process. She infers that the rushed nature of the process inevitably led to the failure of adequately incorporating "textbook" good practices (like *Eva Ronhaar*, *Ana Leao*). She also alluded to lessons learned in providing adequate security measures for women. Though programmes are well-intended, they may fail to adequately address women's security, particularly when such programming is rushed. She also spoke about children who resented their reintegration and being controlled by people they don't know.

*Eva Ronhaar* (UN-INSTRAW) and *Ana Leao* (Independent Consultant and PhD Candidate) also referred to the challenge of time restraints in planning and conducting DDR programming as well as the importance of cultural contexts. *Ana Leao* drew upon her experience in Mozambique and agrees with *Courtney Rowe* about the failure of a model in which reintegration packages are exchanged for arms, saying that this excludes unarmed members of armed groups. This point was also made by *Courtney Rowe*, whom suggested that such practice often excludes former female members of armed groups. *Ana Leao* further recommends a needs analysis or "pre-mapping" during the time in which NGOs have access to cantonments and the formation of specific health care facilities. Her good practices include: engaging communities; engaging men to prevent GBV (such as domestic violence); assessing training/schooling from a specific needs-based approach; supporting women's networks and associations for self-empowerment and organization (like *drbunmi*).

*Shauna Kelly* (Graduate student, Monterey Institute of International Studies and Intern, IANSA) shared her experience interviewing organizations, survivors/victims and ex-combatants in Sierra Leone. She suggests that DDR programmes should coordinate with peacekeeping operations and reintegration efforts in order to ensure sustainability. She also described a potential lesson learned saying that "civilian" victims of the conflict (such as the case of amputation survivors and survivors of sexual violence) who were not beneficiaries of DDR programmes expressed frustration because they received far less financial and vocational training support. She advocates transparency to the community of DDR's ultimate goal as a way of minimizing the possibility of conflict resurgence and broadening the types of beneficiaries, a point that is echoed by *Eva Ronhaar* (UN-INSTRAW), *Ana Leao* (Independent Consultant and PhD Candidate), and *Courtney Rowe*.

### **Implementing UNSCR 1325**

*Corey Barr* (UN-INSTRAW) discussed the incorporation of DDR into current UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans, noting that donor countries tend to have greater coverage of DDR issues than those of conflict-affected countries. She asked participants to share examples of how DDR plans have incorporated UNSCR 1325 and how civil society and grassroots organizations working on DDR have used UNSCR 1325 as tool in their advocacy work.

*Mavic Cabrera-Balleza* (International Coordinator, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders) responded to the question of implementing UNSCR 1325, referring to the country and community workshops held by the GNWP in which a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is integrated. DDR focused discussions are an intended follow-up practice, with an outcome aim of concrete community-based programmes that address stigmas against female ex-combatants from families and communities.

### **Women's Participation**

*Solomon* (Secretariat Advisor, Pacesetters Youth Network) also emphasized the gender-based violence that many women experience during and post-conflict and the need for women's participation in the planning of DDR.

As another case study, *Miranda Worthen* (UC Berkeley) described the key findings and recommendations of a participatory action research project with female ex-combatants whom had children during the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and northern Uganda. She explained their exclusion from reintegration programmes and suggested the need to utilize community-based approaches and to create support groups (as suggested by *drbunmi*). Further good practices included empowering women through their participation, encouraging mentorship and advocacy by community members, ensuring ownership by community members and ensuring sustainable sources of income and funding.

*Courtney Rowe* (International Human Rights Law Institute, DePaul University) also cited the need to encourage women's participation, both as combatants and civilians and that such programmes must address women's specific needs, including pre-natal and child care, preventative treatment of STIs.

### **Gender Roles in DDR Programming**

*Ms. Sahro Ahmed Koshin* (Gender and DDR Officer, UNDP Somalia) noted women's exclusion from DDR and the unequal gender relations in the Somali process. She emphasizes the importance of considering issues such as gender, ethnicity, age and illiteracy and the challenge of the arms exchange model.

In discussing needs analysis, *Eva Ronhaar* (UN-INSTRAW) points to a lesson learned in East Africa, where time restraints, lack of knowledge and information sharing affected efficacy. Without an adequate needs assessment, target groups were not properly identified and many were excluded from the process. Though female ex-combatants were provided vocational training, the reintegration programme failed to address rising rates of domestic violence, in part due to shifting gender roles.

Referring to adopted measures in reintegration and gender roles, *Faiza Omar* (Young Peace Brigades, Ghana) pointed to the difficulty women had in securing jobs, due to being stigmatized as "violent, commercial sex workers," with limited social support; most vocational training invokes one or two particular trades, in which the needs of women are generally not sought.