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AFGHANISTAN:
**Disarmament, Demobilization and
Reintegration**

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Foreword

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is an applied approach for achieving successful de-conflicting conditions of stabilization. Indeed, Disarmament regards the physical removal of the means of fighting from former combatants (weapons, ammunitions, etc.); Demobilization entails the disbanding of armed groups as organized formations; and Reintegration refers to the process of reintegrating ex-belligerents into civil society, in order to avoid, or at least diminish, the risk of a possible resurgence of armed conflict or criminal activities.

Usually, scholars and experts in the field stress the following three conditions as a minimum for a successful DDR “campaign”:

- fighting in the theatre of interest must be completely or at least nearly ended, and a significant peacekeeping force must be deployed to ensure no renewal of conflict;
- all former fighting factions must be included in the process, because, without disarming all combatants, the potential for a conflict renewal remains high;
- sufficient resources must be assured for all the duration of the process, because an incomplete reintegration of former belligerents leaves a dangerous situation in post-conflict societies.

Let us now analyze how the DDR approach in Afghanistan has been carried out.

DDR in post-2001 Afghanistan: an overview

After the disintegration of the professional Afghan army in 1992, for many years an institutionalized monopolization of armed force inside the country simply did not exist, and a large number of militias and warlord armies spread out. With the fall of Taliban at the end of 2001, the international involvement in Afghanistan found itself committed to the edification of a new Afghan National Army (ANA)¹, in a process that had also to include DDR aspects through the disbandment of militia members who were not considered eligible for joining the new unified national military organization or did not wish to join it. One of the most important decisions in this sense was provided by Resolution 1401 approved by the United Nations Security Council on 28 March 2002, aiming to establish the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in order to support the country’s reconstruction and assisting the DDR programme².

In May 2002, in conjunction with UNAMA, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and the transitional Afghan government, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) proposed a DDR plan with regard to around 175,000 ex-belligerents³. This initial programme was developed during 2003 and was assigned to UNDP and a new Afghan institution known as the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), established in March 2003. ANBP was sponsored for all DDR issues by the

¹ With no more than 70,000 effectives according to the Petersberg Decree, signed by the President H. Karzai in December 2002.

² UNAMA was provided with an allocated budget of \$ 37.9 million during the period from April to December 2003, and a deputy responsible for DDR issues was assigned to the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative in Afghanistan (SGSR).

³ Too much optimistic preliminary estimates indicated that the number of those interested by a DDR programme could be as high as 750,000.

Japanese government in a leading position, and with the involvement of Canada, the USA, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland⁴. So, UNDP, through its regional offices, was appointed as the “lead organization” for DDR in Afghanistan, with the ANBP⁵ as the “implementing organization”. They were assisted by the Disarmament Commission and the Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission⁶, as decided in the Petersberg Decree. The ANBP had a central office in Kabul along with eight Regional Verification Committees (RVC)⁷, and its DDR programme was functioning until June 2006⁸, in accordance with the plans. In details, the disarmament and demobilization phases lasted from October 2003 to November 2005 when militias (and private armies) were almost completely disbanded, while the reintegration phase ended by June 2006. Moreover, for each of its eight RVCs, the ANBP detached one Mobile Disarmament Unit (MDU) and engaged both Afghan and international NGOs as Implementing Partners (IP) with funds provided by the UNDP to assist in the recruitment of staff. The pattern of the process can be shown as follows:

Body	Ministry of Defence Operational Groups	→	Regional Verification Committees (RVCs)	→	8 Mobil Disarmament Units (MDUs)	→	Regional Offices
	Selection of individuals and units in each region		Verification		Disarmament		Demobilisation Reintegration

Source: <http://www.escolapau.org/>

Towards the end of the ANBP’s DDR project, a so-called Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme has been established in order to go further the DDR programme. ANBP is fully involved in it, as is the case with another security programme: the Anti Personnel Mines & Ammunition Stockpile Destruction Project. Indeed, in July 2004, by Afghan Presidential decree 50, over 1,800 armed groups (perhaps totalling up to 120,000 combatants) which had never joined the ANBP programmes were declared illegal. The DIAG⁹ was established in July 2005 as a separate distinctive program led by the Government of Afghanistan and strongly supported by international funds. DIAG has been re-launched several times since its establishment, because, in spite of all efforts, a lot of illegal armed groups, together with bandits and organized drug-criminals, continue to operate with impunity throughout the country, undermining both the Government and international community reconstruction efforts. DIAG, indeed, has always suffered from a lack of credibility and political clout with by both the Government and some members of the international community¹⁰. The principle of the DIAG programme is welcomed by the general public but its feasibility and the difficulties met in its implementation suggest that a major rethinking is needed before it will be possible to make some progress, due to mistrust, corruption and the government’s problems in using its armed and police forces to impose the programme.

⁴ “Collateral” to the ANBP, United States supported the establishment of the new ANA, Germany the reorganization of the police, the United Kingdom anti-drug measures and Italy justice sector reform.

⁵ The Programme Director of ANBP was a UNDP DDR senior official appointed as SGSR’s Senior Advisor on DDR.

⁶ The Demobilization and Reintegration Commission brought together key actors for a comprehensive DDR policy like UNAMA, UNDP, Afghan government agencies such as the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence, and donors.

⁷ RVCs became operational throughout 2003 in the provinces of Kunduz, Kabul/Parwan, Gardez and Mazar-e-Sharif, while in 2004 they were activated in Kandahar, Bamyan, Jalalabad and Herat.

⁸ ANPB has employed up to 60 international and 630 national staff in its central and regional offices.

⁹ Whose donors and political supporters include the United Kingdom, Switzerland, UNDP, Denmark, Canada, Japan (for some specific development projects), Netherlands, European Union, Italy, Germany, United States, ISAF and Enduring Freedom.

¹⁰ For example, some field experts have reported that some DIAG’s efforts aimed to convince local chiefs and warlords in disarming their own combatants have been undermined, not uncommonly, by the sudden appearance of USAID or other programmes, ready to provide for the same amount of helping measures without any condition in exchange.

Structure of the programme

DDR in Afghanistan has been undertaken within the framework of a Security Sector Reform (SSR) strategy, because of its relatively close conjunction with the establishment of ANA and the various new Afghan police (Afghan National Police, or ANP) institutions, and the strong involvement of the local Ministry of Defence. The ANBP's objective has been to collect, store and disable Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the possession of combatants, to discharge militias and private armies (the so-called Afghan Military Forces, or AMF from now on), to provide ex-combatants with job opportunities and/or to assist them in their rejoining the civilian life. The cantonment of heavy weapons was soon added to the programme's goals.

The DDR programme had an initial pilot phase followed by four consecutive phases according to the following pattern:

Phase	Start Date	End Date	Total Disarmed	Total Demobilized
Pilot Phase	1 October 2003	31 May 2004	6,271	7,550
Main Phase 1	1 June 2004	30 August 2004	8,551	7,257
Main Phase 2	1 September 2004	30 October 2004	7,169	3,733
Main Phase 3	1 November 2004	31 March 2005	22,440	20,375
Main Phase 4	1 April 2005	31 July 2005	18,949	23,461
		Total	63,380	62,376 (As of November 2005 when the last AMF units were demobilized)

Source: <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121>

By March 2006, of the 62,376 demobilized, 55,804 former-combatants had chosen a reintegration opportunity (53,415 effectively benefited), leaving aside 2,759 drop-outs. Only 36,571 SALW and 12,248 heavy weapons were surrendered during the whole process, the latter representing 98% of the nation-wide amount. However, considering the ensemble of the various ANBP programmes and other projects like the above mentioned DIAG, by August 2007 about 106,000 arms had been collected and at least 55,000 of them were destroyed. The various programmes had also located almost 30,000 tonnes of munitions and about half of this quantity was consequently destroyed.

Because only AMF members were qualified to join the DDR programme, in the following years special groups like narco-criminals and bandits has needed the establishment of the specific DIAG programme. At any rate, in the ANBP's DDR campaign, the record of AMF members proposed by the Afghan Ministry of Defense was verified by RVCs to guarantee the candidates' sincere attitude toward the programme, with a confirmation by the Team Leader of the MDUs.

RVCs played a significant role in the process due to their particular composition. Indeed, they comprised eight selected Afghan civilians highly respected within their communities and, among their duties, they were also responsible for treating special cases, such as child soldiers, drug addicts and members of other vulnerable groups.

MDU's were particularly important, because they were tasked with travelling throughout their regions to disarm the AMFs. They consisted of both military staff provided by the Ministry of Defence and ANBP national and international staff. All collected weapons were stored and secured with the MDU until they could be sent to a central weapons storage facility in Pol-e Charki, the ANA Central Corps Depot, in order to be destroyed or distributed to the ANA or the ANP.

The two organizations were supervised by an International Observer Group (IOG), consisting of representatives of UNAMA and donor countries.

Differing from other DDR programmes, DDR in Afghanistan was carried out without former combatants' cantonment. Indeed, many AMF members were part-time combatants, who maintained

family homes and had strong ties with their local communities, and, therefore, there were no widespread displacement issues. Then, ANBP chose to develop an integrated and specific reintegration project to offer each ex-combatant a job opportunity that would equate with his standing and capabilities, and that would provide for the needs of his family.

Following a disbandment parade of a militia and the distribution of honourable discharge and medals among its members, every combatant was requested to report the following day to the demobilization cell in the nearest ANBP regional office. Finger prints and photos were taken and stored electronically for physical identification, and a pre-established set of questions were asked and registered about his demographic background and skills, as well as his preferences and aspirations. Furthermore, each former combatant obtained a *shalwar kamiz* (a traditional dress) and a food package. In the initial phases of the programme the ANBP provided for a cash payment to former combatants in two instalments of \$100. Some warlords, however, used to extort such money from their subordinates, in some cases using violence. So, ANBP had to direct the payments into former combatants' benefit packages through other means, such as increasing their weekly salary or providing extra equipment.

At any rate, ANBP closed the two-week gap between demobilization and reintegration by having representatives of implementing partners assist with the reintegration within its regional offices. These representatives supported former combatants immediately after they were demobilized¹¹. The following reintegration opportunities were offered to former combatants by ANBP's implementing partners¹²:

Reintegration Options	
<i>Agriculture</i>	The standard agricultural packages were developed in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. Varying from region to region, the following options were devised: nursery development, beekeeping, fisheries, livestock distribution or a package of seeds, tools and fertilizer.
<i>Vocational Training and Job Placement</i>	ANBP's vocational training strategies take into consideration the unique circumstances in Afghanistan, the lessons learned from previous programmes in other countries and the priorities indicated by the government and the respective communities. Soldiers can choose training in a range of areas, such as carpentry, masonry, computer training, auto-mechanic, tailoring and metal work.
<i>Business Opportunities</i>	For officers and soldiers who wish to start or build up a business, ANBP's implementing partners offered business training courses, a small grant and continued assistance with their undertaking.
<i>De-mining</i>	With the help of the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA), a community-based de-mining programme for ex-soldiers has been developed. After completing de-mining training ex-combatants are regularly referred to de-mining agencies for employment.
<i>Wage Labour</i>	Where required, and due primarily to the implications of seasons on programmes, ex-soldiers are offered the option of a short-term interim wage labour position.
<i>ANA or ANP</i>	Officers and soldiers who wish to join the ANA or ANP are directed to the appropriate recruiting stations. Former soldiers wishing to join the ANA Officer Corps must pass an officer's exam and demonstrate adequate level of literacy.
<i>Teacher Training</i>	Up to 600 officers who have completed twelfth grade are eligible to take teacher training courses in Kabul.

¹¹ ANBP also developed a Mobile Reintegration Unit (MRU) to assist former combatants in remote areas.

¹² ANBP also complemented the reintegration options with literacy classes that taught the Dari or Pashto alphabet and developed reading comprehension skills.

Contracting Teams	Given the current opportunities in the construction industry, ANBP assists in putting together small contracting teams.
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Source: <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121>

The distribution of opportunities chosen by the reintegration participants is as follows:

Total Reintegrated	Agricultural	Vocational training	Small business	Demining	ANA
55,804	24,160	13,253	14,687	1,102	761
Percentage	43.30%	23.70%	26.30%	1,40%	1,40%
ANP	Contracting team	Other	Teacher Training	Not participating in reintegration	
105	501	773	462	2,659	
0,20%	0.90%	1.40%	0,80%	4,80%	

Source: <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121>

Furthermore, ANBP and UNDP, in accordance with the Afghan Government, decided to implement a Reintegration Support Project (RSP) several months after the DDR “campaign” ended with the aim to: deal with civil servants in relevant ministries and train them in reintegration issues management; permit ANBP to look at various occupation opportunities for former combatants; continue to provide support to the reintegration process by supplying necessary skills required by the Government of Afghanistan.

The special groups in the DDR in Afghanistan

The average age of demobilised soldiers was 27. 11 percent of the cases involved “officials” (or individuals recognized as “commanders”), who were on average 37 years old. The majority of these combatants were members of community-based militias and, therefore, the MDU system for identification had good results. However, while part-time, “half-day” combatants willingly joined demobilisation, other veterans and professional former belligerents were more difficult to persuade. Amongst them, there were many “officials” and commanders.

For these, ANBP created a commander-oriented reintegration programme called “Commanders Incentive Programme” (CIP). It was focused on the reintegration of roughly 320 commanders and 140 Ministry of Defence generals according to various reintegration packages, including a financial redundancy package to maintain minimum income levels as they reintegrate into Afghan civil society and join business management training and trips abroad.

Children were identified as another special group. Following RVC’s screening child soldiers were referred to UNICEF, which established a specific programme for children of 17 years or younger who had been enrolled by the AMF. Operational since February 2004, the programme involved not more than two hundred children. Reintegration options focused especially on education and vocational training opportunities and they relied heavily on the support of local communities through Demobilization and Reintegration Committees, consisting of community leaders and locally-based NGOs. More important was the WFP involvement that supported DDR by providing 153,915 children of ex-combatants with de-worming treatment and Food for Education assistance projects.

The number of women members of AMF was also negligible. Only four female members of the AMF joined the DDR programme: two in 2004 and two in 2005. They chose ANBP’s small business package as the option for the reintegration. Then, surplus funding was diverted into funding other projects for the wives and female family members of former combatants, like literacy,

small nursery and teacher training. As of July 2006, 24,536 women had obtained or were scheduled to obtain additional education and income generation opportunities in development programmes. Furthermore, a Letter of Intent has been agreed between ANBP and the WFP to facilitate the inclusion of 4,455 women in WFP-related projects from 2006 to 2010.

Surprisingly, also the number of AMF disabled combatants was small. This was due to the fact that most of them had already been discharged by the Ministry of Defence before ANBP had commenced. At any rate, disabled former combatants were offered access to all reintegration packages as they saw fit. ANBP, in addition, provided livestock to disabled former combatants as well as to elderly veterans to supplement their reintegration packages.

Budget, financing and partners for the DDR approach in Afghanistan

The DDR mission in Afghanistan had initially been allocated \$169 million through the UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery Thematic Trust Fund. This was the main mechanism for receiving, managing and allocating funds for ANBP. However, this figure was soon significantly decreased as the number of combatants joining the programme reduced. At the end of June 2006, the UNDP completed the DDR programme with an overall final budget of \$141.1 million. To this number \$4 million budgeted for the RSP and financed by Great Britain should be added.

The following shows the distribution of funds per country as donors:

Distribution of funds per donors		
Donor	Millions \$	%
Japan	91.7	65%
United Kingdom	19	13%
Canada	16	11%
United States	9	6%
Netherlands	4	3%
Norway	0.8	< 1%
Switzerland	0.5	< 1%
European Commission	0.1	< 1%
TOTAL	141.1	

Source: <http://www.escolapau.org/>

However, to these numbers other funds should be added. Indeed, IOM was granted \$ 709,402 by UNICEF, \$ 15,458 by ANBP, and EUR 3 million by Italy, while UNICEF was provided with \$ 5 million by the United States, Japan and Germany as well as by UNICEF national committees in France, Germany and Japan.

Furthermore, ANBP worked through a lot of implementing partners, in addition to the Afghan Interim Administration before and after the Government, and UNAMA. These are listed as follows according to their role for each component of the DDR process:

- Disarmament: ISAF (for matters concerning security and heavy weapons collection) and HALO Trust, RONCO and DynCorp/UXB International (for matters concerning weapon, mine and ammunition destruction);
- Demobilization: carried out by ANBP itself;

- Reintegration: International Organization for Migration (IOM), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA); local government ministries such as the Ministry of Education (for matters concerning teacher training) and the Ministry of Communications (for matters concerning small business); and around 30 NGOs both national and international.

Lessons learned

ANBP's DDR in Afghanistan has been successful regarding: the cooperation between UNAMA and UNDP; the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission which proved to be a well-suited organization for coordination; the commitment of donors and governments to the programme which was appropriate.

However, it must be taken into account that, although DDR was very efficient, it proved itself not very effective, as demonstrated by the need of a DIAG programme which itself is neither efficient nor effective in the absence of a firm commitment by the UN to guarantee fulfilment in line with international standards.

There are many reasons for the described outcome.

First of all, there is a persistent refusal by many irregular commanders to join the DDR process. It is estimated that, also with DIAG still active some 850 groups, totalling 65,000 AMF members, have not participated in any of the DDR programmes.

Secondly, much evidence has been collected that several warlords who joined the DDR process have retained some weapons in spite of the special treatment they received.

Thirdly, several problems have been identified by literature, scholars and experts. These problems, occurred especially during the implementation phases, are summarized as follows: exaggeration of the number of troops declared by some commanders and warlords, with the aim to gain more financial resources; extortion from combatants by their leaders; a considerable number of ex-combatants were forced to participate in DDR programmes; limited emphasis on the collection of valuable SALW as opposed to very old and/or collective weapons (this explains the above mentioned difference in the collection of heavy weapons vs. SALW); the excessive time required by the ANA and ANP's build-up combined with excessive time taken by the international forces in stretching its presence to all the regions of the country; and, perhaps most important, difficulties in reintegration due to the country's almost non-existent economic growth. This and the fact that in various places a lot of former combatants have been trained for the same jobs makes that a considerable number of participants to the programme are facing migration in order to improve their chance of finding work.

These issues are not uncommon in a lot of post-conflict theatres of operation, as it is demonstrated by an important literature on the matter¹³. Consequently, a doctrine that includes DDR issues in the early planning stages of an operation is required in both military and civil pre-intervention activities in a post-conflict theatre (the aim is to avoid some recurring competitive approaches by different organizations and programmes susceptible to undermine the whole process, as highlighted by some of the above mentioned examples). Based on a complementary logic, between DDR and SSR processes a stricter linkage must additionally be pursued in future operations, as they represent

¹³ The annual "Analysis of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs in the world" publication series carried out by <http://www.escolapau.org/> summarize with great evidence the recurring of such difficulties.

different faces of the same coin. This is true especially for theatres, like Afghanistan, which are not completely “post-conflict”, and are furthermore not characterized by the three conditions (mentioned at the beginning) required as a minimum for a successful DDR “campaign”.

