

OG 4.20: Demobilization

4.20

DEMobilIZATION

Objectives

This module will:

- ✓ provide guidance on the factors to take into account when planning for demobilization;
- ✓ outline the advantages and disadvantages of cantonment as opposed to mobile demobilization, and how to choose the best approach;
- ✓ explain how to choose and construct a demobilization site;
- ✓ explain the role of reinsertion assistance; and
- ✓ provide guidance on how to manage the demobilization process.

1. Introduction

Demobilization is a multifaceted process that officially certifies an individual's change of status from being a member of a military grouping of some kind to being a civilian. It involves the physical separation of a combatant from the command and control of his/her armed force or group, as well as his/her psychological transformation from a military to a civilian mindset.

Combatants formally acquire civilian status when they receive documentation that confirms their final discharge from their armed force or group. However, the process of cutting formal ties with military command structures is a long and difficult one. As such, it requires important preparatory work that will assist the socio-economic reintegration of a former combatant into civilian life.

Demobilization contributes either to downsizing armed forces or groups or disbanding them completely. It is part of the wider demilitarization efforts of a society

Box 4.20.1: Definition of demobilization

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.

Source: Note by the Secretary-General on administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of UN peacekeeping operations, 24 May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31)

emerging from conflict. It is therefore a symbolically important phase in the consolidation of peace.

Whereas disarmament is primarily the responsibility of the military, supported by civilian staff, demobilization is primarily the responsibility of the civilian component of the peacekeeping mission, with military support.

Since it is the process through which combatants re-acquire civilian status, demobilization can be best supported by civilians. Exposure to civilian lifestyles and mindsets can encourage ex-combatants to focus on their future as civilians, and increase their chances of successfully reintegrating into society.

2. The two approaches to demobilization

There are two distinct approaches to demobilization: using semi-permanent demobilization sites, i.e. cantonment¹ (called the static method) or the mobile method, where demobilization occurs at the places where groups of ex-combatants are gathered. Although cantonment was long considered standard practice, increasingly DDR programmes are using mobile demobilization, as it is cheaper, more expedient and more flexible than cantonment. It may be chosen particularly if the designated group is small and already cantoned in one place. The specific country context and the security situation in particular should guide such a decision.

Box 4.20.2: Which is the right approach for your demobilization programme?

The following questions will help DDR practitioners to decide on the most appropriate approach:

- How much time has passed since the fighting ended?
- Are the combatants already in the communities where they will reintegrate?
- Does the security context indicate that cantonment is necessary?
- Will cantonment play an important peace-building role in the peace process?
- What are the sizes of the armed forces and groups participating in the process?
- What is the composition of the armed forces and groups in terms of women, children, youth and the disabled, and how will cantonment affect these people?
- What are the potential risks of cantonment for any of these groups of people?
- Will there be enough resources for cantonment, i.e. to build and run campsites?
- Does the context allow for the use of alternatives to cantonment?

Each approach has distinct advantages and disadvantages, and DDR planning teams should consider these carefully in relation to the specific situation in the affected country before choosing one or the other.


Table 4.20.1: Some advantages and disadvantages of cantonment (static demobilization) and mobile demobilization

Cantonment (static demobilization)	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allows administrative and logistic needs to be pre-planned and material to be stockpiled ■ Facilitates easier counting, identification, registration and health screening ■ Can help clearly mark the transition from military to civilian life, and can help combatants adjust mentally to the change in status ■ Provides an opportunity for detailed individual profiling ■ Provides an opportunity for detailed sensitization, orientation and counselling regarding reinsertion and reintegration benefits and opportunities ■ Is more acceptable to formal armed forces, who are used to barrack life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Costly to construct and maintain, especially when taking into account the needs of special groups, such as women, children and dependants ■ Can become a focal point for crime and other security problems ■ Attracts media attention, which is often negative ■ Can create a negative mindset and discontent among combatants, and can be seen as a loss of freedom by informal armed groups ■ Potentially dangerous for female combatants and women associated with armed forces and groups, who may require separate cantonment areas ■ May be difficult for disabled ex-combatants to reach, so limiting their access to the programme ■ May attract local people scavenging for supplies and foodstuffs ■ May become 'permanent' if demobilization and/or reintegration are delayed ■ Can contribute to local environmental degradation and serious resource scarcity
Mobile demobilization	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is cheaper, more expedient and more flexible than cantonment ■ Reduces the logistic requirements related to transportation and food supplies if combatants to be demobilized are already based in the communities where they will reintegrate ■ Works best with disciplined, recognizable units that are willing to demobilize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The full range of services to participants may not be available ■ The psychological effects of demobilization are less clearly felt ■ Is more dependent on the willingness of combatants to participate in the DDR process

- Does not reproduce power structures found in military life
- May be less of a security risk than cantonment
- Is less coercive (i.e. less force is required)
- Can focus more on individual combatants and small groups, including special groups
- Is often more accessible to disabled ex-combatants
- May allow greater community involvement

 **A more complete list of advantages and disadvantages of both cantonment and mobile demobilization is found in sections 7.1 and 7.2 of IDDRS 4.20 on Demobilization.**

 **For discussions of how cantonment affects particular groups, see IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender and DDR, sections 6.2.1 and 6.6, IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR, section 11.2 and IDDRS 5.30 on Children and DDR, sections 6.1 and 6.2.**

 *Where cantonment is thought to be necessary, the DDR planning team should take all possible measures to minimize the negative aspects of this approach. Cantonment should always be kept as short as possible (one week to a month), and should not start before demobilization and reintegration are ready to begin.*

An alternative to both cantonment and mobile demobilization has been recently pioneered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the DDR programme in the Republic of Congo. This approach is based on a network of DDR offices established throughout the country. DDR participants remain in their respective camps or communities, and report to the nearest DDR office for disarmament; registration, including psychological and medical screening as needed; information, counselling and referral services; demobilization; reinsertion; and reintegration assistance. This approach has the advantage of carrying out disarmament and demobilization activities using the facilities that would have to be established anyway to provide reintegration assistance to ex-combatants.

3. Planning for demobilization

To be well planned, demobilization should be based on a detailed assessment of the particular circumstances in which DDR will take place. Generally, there should be a phased approach to demobilization (which should include a pilot test phase), to learn from mistakes in the early phases and make necessary adjustments in later phases. Specific factors should be taken into account during planning for demobilization:

Table 4.20.2: Factors to take into account when planning demobilization

Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Security shall be assured from disarmament to the reintegration phase. In post-conflict environments, security is often dependent on the UN military and police, in close coordination with national authorities. ■ In general, the UN military force should provide external, area and proximity security to any DDR site. Demobilization sites should be weapons-free zones; however, if necessary, security within demobilization sites may be provided by lightly equipped and well-trained security services or police. ■ Special security measures to deal with issues related to women and disabled ex-combatants should be arranged before demobilization begins. ■ Specifically designed security measures should be developed for mobile demobilization processes. These should be organized in close coordination with national authorities, the military and civilian stakeholders. ■ There should be standard operating procedures (SOPs) for controlling the number and flow of combatants being demobilized.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whether cantonment or the mobile type, demobilization sites should be easily accessible to each armed force and group, be located in the areas under their control and be secured by neutral forces. ■ UN military forces, UN Police (UNPOL) and/or various UN agencies are responsible for the establishment, security and supply of demobilization sites. ■ The choice of site location depends on the availability of water, accessibility by road and air, and the condition of the terrain.
Size/capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The size and capacity of demobilization camps are determined by the number of combatants to be demobilized and the time required for processing them. ■ Camps for smaller numbers of combatants can be used, as they are easier to administer, control and secure, but too many smaller camps can also lead to widely dispersed resources, and logistic and other support problems.
Information management: databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An information management system should be installed, tested and secured as early as possible. ■ The database should be mobile, suitable for use in the field, cross-referenced and able to provide DDR teams with a clear overview of where participants have reintegrated and what their cumulative profiles are. ■ The Joint Logistics Operation Centre (JLOC) is responsible for the provision of equipment, and the camp manager is responsible for its maintenance. ■ The DDR unit/team information systems officer should ensure the suitability of the hardware and software for the intended purpose.

Inter-agency coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An inter-agency coordination group should be established, which may also include donor representatives. ■ At both the regional level and at the disarmament and demobilization sites themselves, the camp manager and military commander form the core of the DDR implementing group, which should also include the operational implementation partners responsible for each site. ■ DDR managers at the regional and subregional levels should adequately liaise with local leaders and security implementers to ensure that nearby communities are not badly affected by the demobilization camp or process.
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 **Section 5 of IDDRS 4.20 on Demobilization provides more detailed information on each planning factor summarized in Table 4.20.2, above.**

 **For information on eligibility criteria and screening, see sections 2 and 3 of OG 2.30 on Participants, Beneficiaries and Partners.**


4. Activities during demobilization


Demobilization is a multifaceted process that serves several purposes before ending with the final discharge of combatants. Many activities are therefore involved:

Table 4.20.3: Activities during demobilization

Access and reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All routes to the demobilization site must be thoroughly monitored and guarded by UN military forces to provide security. ■ On arrival, individuals should be checked against the list of those to be demobilized and searched again for concealed weapons or munitions.
Registration and documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ After combatants have been screened and identified as being eligible for participation, they should be registered and issued with identity documents. ■ Copies of the registration forms and personal documentation should be stored in a secure place and included in the DDR database as soon as possible.
Introduction and briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ex-combatants and those associated with armed forces and groups should be provided with guidance/introductory briefings upon arrival, so as to ensure that they are informed about the DDR process, that they understand the rules and regulations they are expected to observe, and to respond to any concerns they may have about the process. See the related cross-reference after this table.
Information, counselling and referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This can take place at the demobilization site, or may be postponed to the reintegration stage. See the related cross-reference after this table.

Health screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DDR participants should undergo health screening. Those who require immediate medical attention of a kind that is not available in the camp should be taken to a hospital (by the suitable partner agency). ■ Basic specialized attention in the areas of reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including voluntary HIV counselling and testing, should be provided. The senior medical staff member should be responsible for the overall supervision of medical support services. It cannot be assumed that medical personnel are trained as HIV counsellors. <p>See the related cross-references after this table.</p>
Pre-discharge awareness-raising/sensitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Before being discharged, former combatants should be given advice on the challenges of transition from military to civilian life. ■ Pre-discharge awareness-raising/sensitization should be closely coordinated with provisions for reinsertion and reintegration. ■ Pre-discharge awareness-raising/sensitization help avoid misinterpretation and the creation of false or unrealistic expectations, which can seriously undermine DDR. <p>See the related cross-reference after this table.</p>

 For more information about the topics to be covered in introductory briefings, see section 8.4 of IDDRS 4.20. For more detailed information on information, counselling and referral, see section 4 of OG 4.30 on Social and Economic Reintegration, and section 8.2 of IDDRS 4.30. On health-related matters, see OG and IDDRS 5.60 on HIV/AIDS and DDR, and OG and IDDRS 5.70 on Health and DDR. For more information on pre-discharge orientation, see IDDRS 4.20, section 8.7 and OG 4.60 on Public Information and Strategic Communication in Support of DDR.

 *High levels of drug abuse among ex-combatants (adult and children) are common. In addition to social, psychological and health complications, drug-dependent individuals may cause problems at the demobilization site and may potentially upset the dynamics of their community before reintegration.*

 **OG 5.70 on Health and DDR**

5. Choosing and constructing a demobilization site

Many factors should be taken into account when choosing the best demobilization site. Ideally, the location and accessibility of disarmament and/or demobilization sites should be included in the terms of the peace agreement between the parties to the conflict. If this is not the case, these parties should be involved in choosing locations and preparing the disarmament and demobilization timetable.

Box 4.20.3: Key factors to take into account when choosing and constructing a demobilization site

- *What will make the site most accessible?* Closeness to roads, airfields, rivers and railways should be taken into account. Accessibility for the protection force to secure the site and for logistic and supply lines is essential. How weather changes (e.g. the start of the rainy season) will affect accessibility (e.g. closing of roads or potential flooding from a nearby natural water course) should be considered.
- *What is the size and profile of the caseload?* Sufficient data on the number of combatants and dependants and on the number of weapons involved should be collected well in advance to plan for the number and size of disarmament sites. If security and logistic requirements allow, the disarmament and demobilization processes should take place at the same site, which should have a weapons collection point and a demobilization area.
- *How can the demobilization site be made a secure environment?* When establishing sites, it is important to ensure they have been inspected and cleared of landmines, as well as to take into account how close the site is to potential threats, including international borders. The security of nearby communities should also be a factor.
- *What general amenities should every demobilization site have?* These include a potable water supply; easy set-up of washing and toilet facilities; drainage for rain and waste; local power and food supplies; cooking and eating facilities; lighting, both for security and functionality; and space for recreational facilities, including sports, where appropriate. Special arrangements should be made for children, disabled persons and pregnant or lactating women. Environmental hazards, pollution, infestation and dangerous habitats should be avoided.
- *What type of storage facilities are required?* Secure and guarded facilities for temporary storage should be set up, including secure storage for weapons and ammunition that have been handed in. Transportation should be organized as soon as possible for surrendered weapons and ammunition that are to be moved to permanent storage or destruction sites.
- *What conditions are necessary for an effective communications infrastructure?* The site should be located in an area suitable for radio and/or telecommunications infrastructure.

5.1. Possible sites that can be used

Sometimes there are not enough programme resources to run DDR programmes. Using pre-existing camps may allow for more resources to be directed towards combatants with specific needs and community reintegration programmes. Where relevant, the following sites that can save resources should be considered:

- *Refurbishment/repair and temporary use of community property:* If available, existing hard-walled property should be used. The decision should be made by weighing the medium- and long-term benefits to the community of repairing local facilities against the overall security and financial implications. These installations may not need rebuilding, and may be made usable by adding plastic sheeting, concertina wire, etc. Possible sites include disused factories, warehouses, hospitals, schools, colleges, farms, etc. Efforts should be made to verify ownership and avoid legal complications. Such refurbish-

ment should be planned in close coordination with recovery planners to ensure that it may have longer-term benefits;

- *Refurbishment/repair and temporary use of state/military property:* Where regular armed forces or well-organized / disciplined armed groups are to be demobilized, the use of existing military barracks, with the agreement of national authorities, should be considered. These should provide enough security and may have the required infrastructure already in place. The same security and administration arrangements should apply to these sites as to others.

5.2. Construction: Contracted or military?

If the UN military force in the area has the necessary logistic and administrative capabilities, a quicker and more reliable option would be to use its construction skills. When this option is not available, it may be necessary to contract the work to a commercial company or non-governmental organization (NGO). This may involve, however, several potential risks, including:

- the possibility of the lengthy process of UN tendering, issuing of contracts and payment causing the programme to fall behind schedule, which can create serious security problems;
- the potential for remaining armed groups to attack, threaten or extort ‘protection’ fees from the contractor;
- lack of knowledge about the contractor’s reliability;
- the possibility that the local community may complain of lack of employment opportunities; and
- the particular danger of employing ex- (or soon to be demobilized) combatants in terms of control of the workforce. This should be avoided.

6. Managing a demobilization site


After choosing the most appropriate demobilization site, constructing or refurbishing existing facilities and putting all the amenities and conditions in place, DDR planners need to know how to manage a demobilization site.

Table 4.20.4: Managing a demobilization site

<p>Coordination of services, supplies and assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When national organizations and legitimate authorities lack capacity, coordination will fall to the UN DDR unit/team, which should work to build the capacity of national actors. ■ The team leader of the regional DDR office responsible for DDR operations in his/her designated area should consult with all relevant agencies about the administration of, and management and operational support to the demobilization operation.
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Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The manager/team leader is responsible for the day-to-day management of the demobilization site. The management and support team should be deployed and trained before operations start. ■ Tenders for management services to demobilization sites should be invited as early as possible. The selected agency may be an international NGO or a national body, if it has the required capacity.
Dealing with people who break camp rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In order to have clear lines of communication and involve DDR participants in camp management, group leaders, including women, should be chosen for reporting any misbehaviour. ■ Penalties for misbehaviour should have an impact on the group as a whole in order to develop a sense of collective responsibility.
Management of disputes/ concerns within the demobilization site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Early discussion of any problem will usually deal with disputes, fears, concerns and anxieties. ■ These are normally the result of miscommunication or a lack of communication, so communications should always be plentiful and clear, to prevent matters from becoming violent. ■ A mechanism should exist between group leaders and staff that will enable arbitration to take place in cases of disputes, complaints and discontent.
Civil–military cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High levels of cooperation are necessary with the military, as they play a large part in the selection, construction and security of the sites. ■ The camp manager/mobile team leader may or may not be military, but the administrator is usually a civilian. Civilian staff of the implementing partner involved will generally contribute to the day-to-day management of the demobilization site. ■ Working routines, responsibilities and guidelines should be developed jointly by the senior military and civilian managers of the camp.
Living conditions, equipment and logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demobilization sites should provide acceptable standards of living when these are required; but if the standard of living is too high, combatants may be reluctant to leave after discharge. ■ Compatible communications systems between the military and civilians should be ensured. ■ A supply chain should be developed in order to ensure the availability of fuel (for generators and vehicles), water and other support materials.

<p>Staff security, and emergency and evacuation planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The senior military commander and demobilization site manager/team leader are responsible for the development and distribution of the emergency and evacuation contingency plan under the guidance and authorization of the regional security officer. ■ In most circumstances, the evacuation of staff and equipment from a site will require high levels of close military protection. The senior military commander and demobilization site manager/team leader should ensure that adequate resources are available at all times, at levels appropriate to the assessed security risk.
<p>Provision of basic needs (food, water and medical treatment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demobilization sites should be supplied with sufficient food and drinking water, as well as adequate shelter, health care and sanitary facilities where necessary. A lack of supplies and poor living conditions endanger the discipline of the ex-combatants. ■ The special needs of men, women, children, infants, disabled and chronically-ill ex-combatants should be catered for. ■ The manager/team leader is responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of basic needs. He/she should liaise closely with the JLOC and military commanders to ensure the safe passage and constant re-supply of consumable stocks. ■ NGOs or government agencies may also be implementing partners for the provision of basic needs. In such situations, the demobilization site manager should monitor and report on the effectiveness of the arrangement, and assist where possible.

 **Do you know what the stores and equipment requirements are for typical static and mobile demobilization sites? See Annexes C and D in IDDRS 4.20 on Demobilization.**

7. Discharge and reinsertion

A discharge document – such as a demobilization declaration – has great symbolic value for ex-combatants, and should be given to them upon completion of the demobilization process. Such documents provide recognition of a person’s military activities, and serve as proof of demobilization and for access to DDR services and programmes. Discharge should be linked with formal honouring ceremonies.

 *No reference should be made in discharge papers to any particular groups or roles, as this may have negative effects during the reintegration phase.*

In order to bridge the gap between demobilization and reintegration, DDR programmes have often provided reinsertion or transitional assistance for the immediate

Box 4.20.4: Definition of 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 a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year.

Source: Note by the Secretary-General on administrative and budgetary aspects of financing of the UN peacekeeping operations, 24 May 2005 (A/C.5/59/31)

and basic needs of the ex-combatant and his/her dependants. Box 4.20.4 defines reinsertion.

DDR programmes should avoid giving cash lump payments during reinsertion, as these have many disadvantages. They can be seen as ‘cash for weapons’, and may be misused to buy drugs and alcohol, or even more weapons. Where it is necessary to provide ex-combatants and their dependants with a means to subsist while waiting for reintegration assistance, money should be paid in small instalments over an extended period of time.

Furthermore, reinsertion assistance should be linked to work or services performed by ex-combatants for their own benefit and that of the community. Quick-impact projects (QIPs) have an important role to play in this. In addition to the reinsertion assistance, and in order to overcome the possible resistance of communities to receive returning ex-combatants, or prevent accusations that combatants are receiving unfair benefits, it may be useful to consider issuing a ‘reintegration voucher’ to ex-combatants. This can be given by them to their community of return, for use in locally designed activities to improve local security and the communities’ capacity to receive ex-combatants.

Table 4.20.5: Basic principles for designing reinsertion

Emergency support	Reinsertion is primarily an emergency support measure and not a payment for participation in the conflict.
Not to be linked to the handover of weapons	Reinsertion should not be directly linked to the turning in of weapons, to avoid putting a monetary value on weapons.
Equity with other war-affected groups	The nature and size of any benefits paid should be equitable between men and women, and with benefits allocated to other groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and affected communities. They should also be in line with local economic indicators (e.g. civil service salaries).
Sound assessment of needs and resources	Reinsertion should be appropriate to the socio-economic context, and based on the assessed needs of the ex-combatants and their dependants during the transitional phase. It should

	also be affordable for the DDR programme. The more money spent on reinsertion, the less money can be invested in reintegration support.
Cash payments	Direct cash payments should be the smallest part of any benefit package. Food and other goods and services (tools, seeds, counselling, etc.) are generally a better option.
Participation in quick-impact projects	Participation in community-based quick-impact projects for short-term livelihood support should be linked to the receipt of reinsertion assistance, particularly any cash payments.

It is important to be aware that reinsertion assistance should:

- in no way prejudice DDR participants' access to long-term reintegration assistance;
- be accounted for in the mission's budget cycle, which usually begins in June/July. Reinsertion should be included in the first submission of the mission's budget; and
- be carried out by one of the implementing partners; however, it is the responsibility of the demobilization site manager to ensure equitable distribution of such assistance.

Furthermore, reinsertion assistance may include a mixture of transport to certain key locations and cash for transport. The logistic implications of providing transport should be taken into account. If transport is provided on UN vehicles, authorizations from UN administration and waivers for passengers should be obtained in advance to avoid last minute blockages and delays. Alternatively, private companies may be subcontracted to provide transport.

8. Summary of key guidance on demobilization

- ✓ Mobile demobilization is cheaper, more expedient and more flexible than cantonment. It has therefore been increasingly used by DDR programmes in the place of cantonment. Cantonment is not a requirement, and it is generally the security context that indicates that cantonment is necessary.
- ✓ The timing and sequencing of demobilization should be realistic and strictly adhered to in order to build the confidence of participants and beneficiaries in the process; and demobilization should not start until pre-agreed conditions of readiness have been achieved.
- ✓ Throughout demobilization it is particularly important to recognize and cater for the specific needs of women, youth, children, the disabled and the chronically ill who participated in combat and/or were associated with armed forces and groups.

- ✓ Reinsertion assistance should not involve large lump-sum cash payments, but if money has to be given to beneficiaries, it should be paid in small instalments, and linked to work or services performed by the ex-combatant for the benefit of the community.