

OG 5.20: Youth and DDR

Objectives

This module will:

- ✓ provide guidance on socio-economic reintegration strategies for young ex-combatants;
- ✓ explain the main components of reintegration programmes for young ex-combatants and youth in general; and
- ✓ describe how to create reintegration opportunities for youth.

1. Introduction

UN DDR programmes have increasingly been carried out in environments where the majority of former combatants are youth, an age group defined by the UN as those between 15 and 24 years of age. Young ex-combatants have special characteristics that need specifically designed DDR activities:

- Youth are neither ‘children’ nor adults, although those under 18 fall in the legal category of children. DDR programmes have tended to treat those under 18 as child soldiers, ignoring the responsibilities they have often undertaken as providers and caregivers. Those over 18, by contrast, have often been offered job training and other support that neglect their need for remedial education;
- Because of their age, youth are easily ignored by the authorities after a conflict. Their vulnerability to violence, disease and other illnesses, and their exclusion from decision-making processes and structures can lead to difficulty in reintegration. This in turn starts a cycle of poverty and frustration that makes youth vulnerable to criminality and re-recruitment into armed forces and groups.

In conflict-affected environments, youth, and young men in particular, are often attracted to subcultures that encourage violence by appealing to their sense of

Box 5.20.1: Definition of youth

Within the UN system, **youth/young people** are identified as those between 15 and 24 years of age. However, this can vary considerably between one context and another. Social, economic and cultural systems define the age limits for the specific roles and responsibilities of children, youth and adults. Conflicts and violence often force youth to assume adult roles such as parents, breadwinners, caregivers or fighters.

marginalization and offering access to power and status. Therefore, even if this category is not specifically mentioned in peace agreements, DDR programmes should take all necessary actions to deal with the special needs of youth, not only because they may become a security threat, but also due to youth's resilience and ability to play meaningful roles in reconciliation and recovery efforts.



Small arms are a particular concern when dealing with youth. Their possession is symbolically powerful in many societies, suggesting pride, power, masculinity, group membership and wealth. DDR programmes should recognize the symbolic value of small arms, and deal with possible issues associated with the loss of this symbol by offering alternative activities for male and female youth that have the same effect.



For further information on children/youth under 18 years of age, see OG 5.30 on Children and DDR.

2. Socio-economic reintegration strategies for young ex-combatants

The socio-economic reintegration of young ex-combatants depends largely on their successful transition to productive activities. Many have no memory of peaceful times or civilian activity, and conflict has influenced them during their formative years. To respond, DDR programmes should:

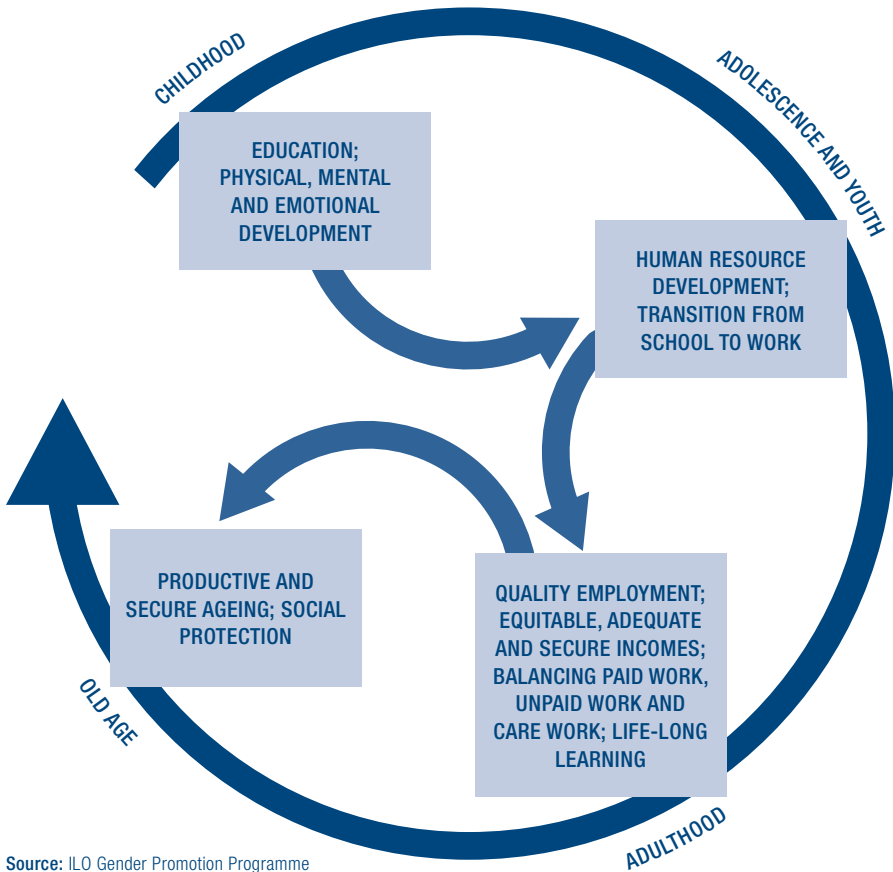
- try to correct patterns of violent behaviour learned during the conflict;
- assist in dealing with youth's sensitiveness to authority and other intergenerational conflicts;
- ensure access to education and training, including apprenticeship programmes;
- help heal psychological traumas, physical wounds and other health problems;
- provide information and counselling on HIV/AIDS; and
- provide support for coping with drugs and alcohol abuse.



For more information on intergenerational conflicts, see section 12.1 of IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR. For more information on youth and HIV/AIDS, see section 12.4 of IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR. On HIV/AIDS and health, see OG 5.60 on HIV/AIDS and DDR and OG 5.70 on Health and DDR.

Understanding how decent work fits into the human life cycle (see Figure 5.20.1) may be useful in planning DDR programmes for youth. This perspective sees youth as a stage of life that can determine outcomes later. If youth are deprived of education, they will have fewer chances of obtaining decent work. They may also be unable to positively influence their children, leading to multiple disadvantages and the perpetuation of poverty.

Figure 5.20.1: Decent work in the life cycle



Source: ILO Gender Promotion Programme

Box 5.20.2: Key guidance on the socio-economic reintegration of young ex-combatants

- Training in hazardous work should be avoided, even if requested by youth. Youth up to age 18 are protected by International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labour (Conventions 138 and 182).
- Training in areas that do not respond to a specific need in the market should be avoided, even if requested by youth. The feeling of frustration that caused youth to take up arms often increases if they cannot find a job after reintegration. Counselling and career guidance are important in this context.
- Opportunities that are appealing to youth should be offered.
- A paternalistic attitude should be avoided.
- It is important to engage in activities that reach and involve many youth. Theatre, music, arts and sports are popular activities, and can further worthwhile goals, such as HIV/AIDS prevention. Youth need spaces to meet away from the streets.

3. Reintegration planning and programme design for young ex-combatants

Reintegration planning should be linked to the national reconciliation strategy and to national socio-economic reconstruction plans. A vital part of planning is situation analysis and data collection on the social and economic profiles and expectations of ex-combatants on the one hand, and on available employment opportunities, including self-employment, on the other.

Labour market information and job opportunities are often scarce in post-conflict countries. Preliminary labour market surveys can make information available quickly, perhaps using questionnaires adapted from other post-conflict contexts. Rapid assessments are also useful. Data on labour supply and demand should be included in the DDR management and information system. It should be disaggregated by age, sex, educational level, location, type of disadvantage (if any) and other relevant criteria. The distribution of such information can also help inform young ex-combatants about realistic employment opportunities.



On assessments, see section 2 of OG 3.20 on DDR Programme Design.

Reintegration programmes for young ex-combatants should be designed to meet the needs of youth in specific situations. Programme design should be based on a range of assessments, including determining whether ‘voluntary’ enlistment was, in fact, voluntary and examining family, cultural, political and other circumstances.

Box 5.20.3: Guidance on developing youth-oriented DDR programmes

DDR programmes should be:

- carefully targeted and specifically designed to meet the individual needs and labour market disadvantages of young ex-combatants. Education is a key element, as it improves employability;
- designed to connect young ex-combatants with non-combatants. This exposes the ex-combatants to civilian behaviour and encourages their inclusion in the community;
- designed to respond to labour market requirements;
- part of a comprehensive package of services covering labour demand (e.g. tax incentives and local economic development initiatives) and supply (e.g. career guidance, education and training);
- linked with work experience. Programmes including such initiatives as apprenticeships and in-company training, especially in the private sector, increase the employability of young ex-combatants;
- based on community approaches and empowerment – which shall explicitly include youth; and
- designed to involve all social partners. Employers’ and workers’ organizations can link reintegration programmes to the labour market.




Annex B in IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR gives examples of youth-focused DDR interventions.

4. Main components of reintegration programmes for young ex-combatants

Table 5.20.1 suggests areas to focus on for reintegration programmes targeting young ex-combatants:

Table 5.20.1: Key focus areas for young ex-combatant reintegration programmes	
Remedial catch-up education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide youth, who have missed part of their education, with accelerated learning programmes (ALP) compatible with and recognized by the formal education system. ■ All educational facilities for young ex-combatants should provide childcare for those who are already parents.
Learning and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programmes should aim at allowing youth to learn at their own pace, and to acquire communication and other job-related skills. ■ Part-time programmes allowing time for other catch-up education are recommended. ■ Life skills, such as civics, parenting skills, rights at work and HIV/AIDS management for youth are also important. ■ Training for trainers is a key part of DDR programmes for youth. Trainers should be facilitators who encourage active learning, foster teamwork and act as positive role models.
Employment-oriented training (main characteristics)	<p>This training should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ labour-market driven and oriented toward specific job opportunities; ■ modular in approach; ■ designed to teach many different skills; ■ competency-based; ■ designed to complement any earlier education participants may have had; and ■ linked with practical work experience such as apprenticeships or on-the-job training.
Employment assistance, career guidance and job-search assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These services match the skills and aspirations of young ex-combatants with employment or education and training services. ■ Youth face several particular problems in identifying and pursuing civilian opportunities: a) they have often never had opportunities to gain work experience; b) they have not dealt with civilian institutions; c) they have no experience looking for employment; and d) they may not know what they can or want to do. Employment and career guidance services may help young ex-combatants overcome such problems.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Such services should build on existing national structures, normally under the ministry of labour or the ministry of youth. They should be open to all youth seeking employment, not just ex-combatants. ■ Staff in career centres should receive training on challenges, problems and difficulties specific to young ex-combatants.
Youth entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A comprehensive youth employment promotion strategy should have the following elements: a) support for an entrepreneurial culture; b) the creation of enabling policies and regulations; and c) capacity building for the provision of support services. ■ DDR programmes should encourage an entrepreneurial culture while youth are still in education and training. Youth may find mentors useful. ■ DDR programmes should link to other development initiatives dealing with the following needs: a) business development and finance; b) safety in the workplace; c) investment; d) the local market, including purchasing power and the availability of raw materials; and e) economic infrastructure.
Microfinance for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to existing micro- or small-business finance and credit schemes should be provided through special arrangements for young ex-combatants.
Business training and business development services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DDR programmes should boost youth's ability to face market challenges with business development education, emphasizing the following skills: a) identifying and responding to opportunities; b) investigating and developing new business ideas; and c) learning how to start a business and manage it successfully. ■ DDR programmes may also encourage business owners to support young entrepreneurs during the vital first years of their businesses. Such support may include on-the-job learning, mentoring, inclusion in networks and associations, and the incorporation of youth-owned businesses into supply chains.

 *The specific needs and capacities of young female ex-combatants are often poorly catered for, especially if DDR is treated purely as a security issue, and it is felt that only young males, who are seen as 'potential trouble makers', need to be disarmed, demobilized and occupied. Evidence from many war zones shows, however, that young female former combatants are equally capable of returning to violence if other means of getting ahead after conflict fail.*

 **For more detailed guidance on female youth, see section 11 of IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR.**

5. Creating reintegration opportunities for youth

DDR programmes have increasingly applied labour market measures specifically designed to improve the reintegration prospects of young ex-combatants.

These focus on demand for labour, and aim to create employment opportunities. Among the most common types of job creation programmes are:

- labour-based public and community works;
- job placement schemes and subsidies; and
- enterprise creation.


 **Annex C in IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR provides more information about youth programmes focusing on labour demand.**

Table 5.20.2 describes labour market measures that may be taken to improve the prospects of reintegration of young ex-combatants:

Table 5.20.2: Labour market measures to improve reintegration prospects of young combatants	
Labour-intensive physical and social infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Short-term employment may improve young ex-combatants' productivity and change their social status from 'destroyers' to 'builders'. ■ Youth may participate in special reconstruction projects that directly benefit them, such as the repair or construction of training centres or sports facilities. ■ Employment-intensive approaches for youth should include other components such as training, mentoring and community services. Public works and community service programmes can be used to involve young ex-combatants in productive activities immediately after demobilization.
Wage incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incentives such as wage subsidies or tax exemptions for employers who hire young ex-combatants may ease their transition to work. ■ Businesses may receive DDR-related contracts on condition that their labour force includes youth. ■ The main issues to consider are: a) the duration of the incentive; b) the amount of subsidy or compensation; c) the type of contractual arrangement; d) providing opportunities equally and fairly to demobilized youth in line with those available to civilian youth; and e) monitoring programmes so as to ensure that incentives increase employability rather than turning youth into a cheap labour force.
Competition in the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DDR programmes should present innovative solutions to enable youth ex-combatants, who often have little or no experience, to enter the labour market. Training courses should teach more than one skill to improve employability.



For more detailed guidance on how to create reintegration opportunities for youth, see section 10 of IDDRS 5.20 on Youth and DDR.

6. Summary of key guidance on youth and DDR

- ✓ DDR programmes should take all necessary actions to deal with the special needs of youth. Youth are a high security risk group, and at the same time an enormous source of resilience and strength that should be channeled to support reconciliation and recovery.
- ✓ Other important issues to consider during youth-focused DDR programmes are: bridging intergenerational conflicts youth may have with authorities; providing avenues for giving youth voice and representation; and providing support to projects alleviating substance abuse, and to awareness programmes on HIV / AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections (STIs).
- ✓ Some key tools to implement labour market measures during reintegration are creating labour-intensive physical and social infrastructure projects for youth, and creating wage incentives, such as partnerships with the private sector.
- ✓ A broad approach towards dealing with the needs of young ex-combatants is essential. Responses should deal with ex-combatants and civilian youth needs simultaneously and coherently.