4.60 Public Information and Strategic Communication in Support of DDR

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Summary

Public information and strategic communication (PI/SC) are key support activities that are instrumental in the overall success of DDR processes. Public information is used to inform DDR participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders of the process, while strategic communication influences attitudes towards DDR. If successful, PI/SC strategies will secure buy-in to the DDR process by outlining what DDR consists of and encouraging individuals to take part, as well as contribute to changing attitudes and behaviour.

A DDR process should always be accompanied by a clearly articulated PI/SC strategy. As DDR does not occur in a vacuum, the design, dissemination and planning of PI/SC interventions should be an iterative process that occurs at all stages of the DDR process. PI/SC interventions should be continuously updated to be relevant to political and operational realities, including public sentiment about DDR and the wider international effort to which DDR contributes. It is crucial that DDR is framed and communicated carefully, taking into account the varying informational requirements of different stakeholders and the various grievances, perceptions, culture, biases and political perspectives of DDR participants, beneficiaries and communities.

An effective PI/SC strategy should have clear overall objectives based on a careful assessment of the context in which DDR will take place. There are four principal objectives of PI/SC: (i) to inform by providing accurate information about the DDR process; (ii) to mitigate the potential negative impact of inaccurate and deceptive information that may hamper the success of DDR and wider peace efforts; (iii) to sensitize members of armed forces and groups to the DDR process; and (iv) to transform attitudes in communities in such a way that is conducive to DDR. PI/SC should make an important contribution towards creating a climate of peace and security, as well as promote gender-equitable norms and non-violent forms of masculinities. DDR practitioners should support their national counterparts (national Government and local authorities) to define these objectives so that activities related to PI/SC can be conducted while planning for the wider DDR process is ongoing. PI/SC as part of a DDR process should (i) be based on a sound analysis of the context, conflict and motivations of the many different groups at which these activities are directed; (ii) make use of the best and most trusted local methods of communication; and (iii) ensure that PI/SC materials and messages are pre-tested on a local audience and subsequently closely monitored and evaluated.

1. Module scope and objectives

This module aims to present the range of objectives, target groups and means of communication that DDR practitioners may choose from to formulate a PI/SC strategy in support of DDR, both at the field

and headquarters levels. The module includes guidance, applicable to both mission and non-mission settings, on the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of a PI/SC strategy.

2. Terms, definitions and abbreviations

Annex A contains a list of abbreviations used in this standard. A complete glossary of all the terms, definitions and abbreviations used in the IDDRS series is given in IDDRS 1.20.

In the IDDRS series, the words 'shall', 'should', 'may', 'can' and 'must' are used to indicate the intended degree of compliance with the standards laid down. This use is consistent with the language used in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards and guidelines:

a) 'shall' is used to indicate requirements, methods or specifications that are to be applied in order to conform to the standard;
b) 'should' is used to indicate the preferred requirements, methods or specifications;
c) 'may' is used to indicate a possible method or course of action;
d) 'can' is used to indicate a possibility and capability;
e) 'must' is used to indicate an external constraint or obligation.

Public information seeks to provide relevant and factually accurate information to a specific audience.

Strategic communication involves persuading an identified audience to adopt a desired behaviour.

Disinformation: The deliberate dissemination of false information. It is an act of deception to convince an audience of something. Disinformation is intended to mislead.

Misinformation: Giving erroneous or incorrect information. It is false or inaccurate information that is spread unintentionally.

3. Introduction

DDR is a process that requires the involvement of multiple actors, including the Government or legitimate authority and other signatories to a peace agreement (if one is in place); combatants and persons associated with armed forces and groups, their dependants, receiving communities and youth at risk of recruitment; and other regional, national and international stakeholders.

Attitudes towards the DDR process may vary within and between these groups. Potential spoilers, such as those left out of the peace agreement or former commanders, may wish to sabotage DDR, while others will be adamant that it takes place. These differing attitudes will be at least partly determined by individuals' levels of knowledge of the DDR and broader peace process, their personal expectations and their motivations. In order to bring the many different stakeholders in a conflict or post-conflict country (and region) together in support of DDR, it is essential to ensure that they are aware of how DDR is meant to take place and that they do not have false expectations about what it can mean for them. Changing and managing attitudes and behaviour – whether in support of or in

opposition to DDR – through information dissemination and strategic communication are therefore essential parts of the planning, design and implementation of a DDR process. PI/SC plays an important catalytic function in the DDR process, and the conceptualization of and preparation for the PI/SC strategy should start in a timely manner, in parallel with planning for the DDR process.

The basic rule for an effective PI/SC strategy is to have clear overall objectives. DDR practitioners should, in close collaboration with PI/SC experts, support their national and local counterparts to define these objectives. These national counterparts may include, but are not limited to, Government; civil society organizations; media partners; and other entities with experience in community sensitization, community engagement, public relations and media relations. It is important to note, however, that PI activities cannot compensate for a faulty DDR process, or on their own convince people that it is safe to enter the programme. If combatants are not willing to disarm, for whatever reason, PI alone will not persuade them to do so.

DDR practitioners should keep in mind that PI/SC should be aimed at a much wider audience than those people who are directly involved in or affected by the DDR process within a particular context. PI/SC strategies can also play an essential role in building regional and international political support for DDR efforts and can help to mobilize resources for parts of the DDR process that are funded through voluntary donor contributions and are crucial for the success of reintegration programmes. PI/SC staff in both mission and non-mission settings should therefore be actively involved in the preparation, design and planning of any events in-country or elsewhere that can be used to highlight the objectives of the DDR process and raise awareness of DDR among relevant regional and international stakeholders. Additionally, PI can play an important role in encouraging a holistic view of the challenges of rebuilding a nation and can serve as a major tool in advocacy for gender equality and inclusiveness, which form part of DDR (also see IDDRS 2.10 on the UN Approach to DDR and IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender and DDR). The role of national authorities is also critical in public information. DDR must be nationally-led in order to build the foundation of long-term peace. Therefore, DDR practitioners should ensure that relevant messages are approved and transmitted by national authorities.

Communication is rarely neutral. This means that DDR practitioners should consider how messages will be received as well as how they are to be delivered. Culture, custom, gender, and other contextual drivers shall form part of the PI/SC strategy design. Information, disinformation and misinformation are all hallmarks of the conflict settings in which DDR takes place. In times of crisis, information becomes a critical need for those affected, and individuals and communities can become vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation. Therefore, one objective of a DDR PI/SC strategy should be to provide information that can address this uncertainty and the fear,

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Misinformation: *Giving erroneous or incorrect information. It is false or inaccurate information that is spread* <u>*unintentionally.*</u>

mistrust and possible violence that can arise from a lack of reliable information.

Merely providing information to ex-combatants, persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups, dependants, victims, youth at risk of recruitment and conflict-affected communities will not in itself transform behaviour. It is therefore important to make a distinction between public information and strategic communication. Public information is reliable, accurate, objective and sincere. For example, if members of armed forces and groups are not provided with such information but, instead, with confusing, inaccurate and misleading information (or promises that cannot be fulfilled), then this will undermine their trust, willingness and ability to participate in DDR. Likewise, the information communicated to communities and other stakeholders about the DDR process must be factually correct. This information shall not, in any case, stigmatize or stereotype former members of armed forces and groups. Here it is particularly important to acknowledge that: (i) no ex-combatant or person formerly associated with an armed force or group should be assumed to have a natural inclination towards violence; (ii) studies have shown that most ex-combatants do not (want to) resort to violence once they have returned to their communities; but (iii) they have to live with preconceptions, distrust and fear of the local communities towards them, which further marginalizes them and makes their return to civilian life more difficult; and (iv) female ex-combatants and women associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFAG) and their children are often stigmatized, and may be survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other grave rights violations.

If public information relates to activities surrounding DDR, strategic communication, on the other hand, needs to be understood as activities that are undertaken in support of DDR objectives. Strategic communication explicitly involves persuading an identified audience to adopt a desired behaviour. In other words, whereas public information seeks to provide relevant and factually accurate information to a specific audience, strategic communication involves complex messaging that may evolve along with the DDR process and the broader strategic objectives of the national authorities or the UN. It is therefore important to systematically assess the impact of the communicated messages. In many cases, armed forces and groups themselves are engaged in similar activities based on their own objectives, perceptions and goals. Therefore, strategic communication is a means to provide alternative narratives in response to rumours and to debunk false information that may be circulating. In addition, strategic communication has the vital purpose of helping communities understand how the DDR process will involve them, for example, in programmes of community violence reduction (CVR) or in the reintegration of ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups. Strategic communication can directly contribute to the promotion of both peacebuilding and social cohesion, increasing the prospects of peaceful coexistence between community members and returning former members of armed forces and groups. It can also provide alternative narratives about female returnees, mitigating stigma for women as well as the impact of the conflict on mental health for both DDR participants and beneficiaries in the community at large.

4. Guiding principles

IDDRS 2.10 on The UN Approach to DDR sets out the main principles that guide all aspects of DDR processes. This section outlines how these principles apply to PI/SC strategies for DDR:

4.1 People centred

DDR practitioners shall manage expectations concerning the DDR process by being clear, realistic, honest, communicative and consistent about what DDR can and cannot deliver. The PI/SC strategy shall focus on the national (and, where applicable, regional) stakeholders, participants and beneficiaries of the DDR process, i.e., ex-combatants, persons associated with armed forces and groups, dependants, receiving communities, parties to the peace agreement, civil society, local and national authorities, and the media.

4.2 Unconditional release and protection of children

Children associated with armed forces and groups and their caregivers shall be provided with child-friendly, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive information about DDR. Information should be provided to children on access to justice and reparation, and on their rights to be free from discrimination and to be safe and protected from violence and abuse. Children should also be informed of the services and support available to them, how to access this support and the procedures to access safe complaint mechanisms and judicial recourse. PI/SC strategies developed as part of a DDR process shall include provisions for disseminating messages on the rights of children and the consequences that armed forces and groups will face if engaging in child recruitment, including messages that dismantle stigma and ostracization by the child's family or home community (noting that stigma can be imposed disproportionately on girls). Communities, local authorities and police shall also be provided with information and training on how to assist children who have exited or been released from armed forces and groups and which protocols apply to ensure their protection and safe handover to child protection services. The personal information of children shall never be shared for the purposes of PI/SC, and all information gathered from children shall be treated according to the requirements of confidentiality.

4.3 Gender responsive and inclusive

PI/SC messages shall take into consideration the needs and interests of women and girls, who play a central role in peacebuilding at the community level. Female ex-combatants and other WAAFAG must be informed about their eligibility for DDR and any special programmes for them, which may require specific strategies and approaches. PI/SC messages shall also encourage the participation of women and

girls in the DDR process. DDR practitioners shall strive to ensure that key messages, communications material and information campaigns are gender responsive, taking into account the need for tailored messaging that addresses the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls. They shall also leverage opportunities to support gender-transformative norms and women's empowerment. Specific attention should be paid to developing gender-responsive information strategies that can play an important role in the reintegration and return of women by mitigating their stigmatization and contributing to community sensitization.

4.4 Conflict sensitive

DDR practitioners shall base any and all strategic communications interventions – for example, to combat misinformation and disinformation – on clear conflict analysis. Strategic communications have a direct impact on conflict dynamics and the perceptions of armed forces and groups, and shall therefore be carefully considered. 'Do no harm' is a standard principle against which all DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support shall be evaluated at all times. No false promises shall be made through the PI/SC strategy.

4.5 Context specific

To increase the effectiveness of a PI/SC strategy, DDR practitioners shall consider cultural factors and levels of trust in different types of media. PI/SC strategies shall be responsive to new political, social and/or technological developments, as well as changes within the DDR process as it evolves. DDR practitioners shall also take into account the accessibility of the information provided. This includes considerations related to both the selection of media and choice of language. All communications methods shall be designed with an understanding of potential context-specific barriers, including, for example, the remoteness of combatants and persons associated with armed forces and groups. Messages should be tested before dissemination to ensure that they meet the above mentioned criteria.

4.6 Nationally and locally owned

DDR practitioners shall ensure that PI/SC strategies are nationally and locally owned. National authorities should lead the implementation of PI/SC strategies. National ownership ensures that DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support are informed by an understanding of the local context, the dynamics of the conflict, and the dynamics between community members and former members of armed forces and groups. National ownership also ensures that PI/SC strategies are culturally and contextually relevant, especially with regard to the PI/SC messages and communication tools used. In both mission and non-mission contexts, UN practitioners should coordinate closely with, and provide support to, national actors as part of the larger national PI/SC strategy. When combined with UN support (e.g. technical, logistical), national ownership encourages

national authorities to assume leadership in the overall transition process. Additionally, PI/SC capacities must be kept close to central decision-making processes, in order to be responsive to the perogatives of the DDR process.

5. Objectives of PI/SC in support of DDR

A PI/SC strategy should outline what the DDR process in the specific context consists of through public information activities and contribute to changing attitudes and behaviour through strategic communication interventions. There are four overall objectives of PI/SC:

- **To inform stakeholders about the DDR process (public information):** This includes providing tailored key messages to various stakeholders, such as where to go, when to deposit weapons, who is eligible for DDR and what reintegration options are available. The result is that DDR participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders are made fully aware of what the DDR process involves. This kind of messaging also serves the purpose of making communities understand how the DDR process will involve them. Most importantly, it serves to manage expectations, clearly defining what falls within and outside the scope of DDR. If the DDR process is made up of different combinations of DDR programmes, DDR-related tools or reintegration support, messages should clearly define who is eligible for what. Given that, historically, women and girls have not always received the same information as male combatants, as they may be purposely hidden by male commanders or may have 'self-demobilized', it is essential that PI/SC strategies take into consideration the specific information channels required to reach them. It is important to note, however, that PI activities cannot compensate for a faulty DDR process, or on their own convince people that it is safe to participate. If combatants are not willing to disarm, for whatever reason, PI alone will not persuade them to do so. In such sitatutions, strategic communications may be used to create the conditions for a successful DDR process.
- **To mitigate the negative impact of misinformation and disinformation (strategic communication):** It is important to understand how conflict actors such as armed groups and other stakeholders respond, react to and/or provide alternative messages that are disseminated in support of the DDR process. In the volatile conflict and post-conflict contexts in which DDR takes place, those who profit(ed) from war or who believe their political objectives have not been met may not wish to see the DDR process succeed. They may have access to radio stations from which they can make broadcasts or may distribute pamphlets and other materials spreading 'hate' or messages that incite violence and undermine the UN and/or some of the (former) warring parties. These spoilers likely will have access to online platforms, such as blogs and social media, where they can easily reach and influence a large number of people. It is therefore critical that PI/SC extends beyond merely providing information to the public. A comprehensive PI/SC strategy shall be designed to identify and address sources of misinformation and disinformation and to develop tailored strategic communication interventions. Implementation should be

iterative, whereby messages are deployed to provide alternative narratives for specific misinformation or disinformation that may hamper the implementation of a DDR process.

- **To sensitize members of armed forces and groups to the DDR process (strategic communication):** Strategic communication interventions can be used to sensitize potential DDR participants. That is, beyond informing stakeholders, beneficiaries and participants about the details of the DDR process and beyond mitigating the negative impacts of misinformation and disinformation, strategic communication can be used to influence the decisions of individuals who are considering leaving their armed force or group including providing the necessary information to leave safely. The transformative objective of strategic communication interventions should be context specific and based on a concrete understanding of the political aspects of the conflict, the grievances of members of armed forces and groups, and an analysis of the potential motivations of individuals to join/leave warring parties. Strategic communication interventions may include messages targeting active combatants to encourage their participation in the DDR process, for example, stories and testimonials from ex-combatants and other positive DDR impact stories. They may also include communication campaigns aimed at preventing recruitment. The potential role of the national authorities should also be assessed through analysis and where possible, national authorities should lead the strategic communication.

- **To transform attitudes in communities so as to foster DDR (strategic communication):** Reintegration and/or CVR programmes are often crucial elements of DDR processes (see IDDRS 2.30 on Community Violence Reduction and IDDRS 4.30 on Reintegration). Strategic communication interventions can help to create conditions that facilitate peacebuilding and social cohesion and encourage the peaceful return of former members of armed forces and groups to civilian life. Communities are not homogeneous entities, and individuals within a single community may have differing attitudes towards the return of former members of armed forces and groups. For example, those who have been hit hardest by the conflict may be more likely to have negative perceptions of returning combatants. Others may simply be happy to be reunited with family members. The DDR process may also be negatively perceived as rewarding combatants. When necessary, strategic communication can be used as a means to transform the perceptions of communities and to combat stigmatization, hate speech, marginalization and discrimination against former members of armed forces and groups. Women and girls are often stigmatized in receiving communities and PI/SC can play a pivotal role in creating a more supportive environment for them. PI/SC should also be utilized to promote non-violent behaviour, including engaging men and boys as allies in promoting positive masculine norms (see IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender and DDR). Finally, PI/SC should also be used to destigmatize the mental health impacts of conflict and raise awareness of psychosocial support services.

6. Planning and designing PI/SC strategies

When designing a PI/SC strategy, DDR practitioners should take the following key factors into account:

- At what stage is the DDR process?

- Who are the primary and intermediary target audiences? Do these target audiences differ for different components of the DDR process (DDR programmes, DDR-related tools, reintegration support)?

- Who may not be eligible to participate in the DDR process? Does eligibility differ for different components of the DDR process (DDR programmes, DDR-related tools, reintegration support)?

- Are other, related PI/SC campaigns underway, and should these be aligned/deconflicted with the PI/SC strategy for the DDR process?

- What are the roles of men, women, boys and girls, and how have each of these groups been impacted by the conflict?

- What are the existing gender stereotypes and identities, and how can PI/SC strategies support positive change?

- Is there stigma against women and girls associated with armed forces and groups? Is there stigma against mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress?

- What are the literacy levels of the men and women intended to receive the information?

- What behavioural/attitude change is the PI/SC strategy trying to bring about?

- How can this change be achieved (taking into account literacy rates, the presence of different media, etc.)?

- What are the various networks involved in the dissemination of information (e.g., interconnections among social networks of ex-combatants, household membership, community ties, military reporting lines, etc.)? Which network members have the greatest influence?

- Do women and men obtain information by different means? (If so, which channels most effectively reach women?)

- In what language does the information need to be delivered (also taking into account possible foreign combatants)?

- What other organizations are involved, and what are their PI/SC strategies?

- How can the PI/SC strategy be monitored?

- What is the prevailing information situation? (What are the information needs?)

- What are the sources of disinformation and misinformation?

- Who are the key local influencers/amplifiers?

- What dominant media technologies are in use locally and by which population segments/demographics?

6.1 Understanding the local context and 'do no harm' considerations

To ensure that the DDR PI/SC strategy fits local needs, DDR practitioners should understand the social, political and cultural context and identify factors that shape attitudes. It will then be possible to define behavioural objectives and design messages to bring about the required social change. Target audience and issue analysis must be adopted to provide a tailored approach to engage with different audiences based on their concerns, issues and attitudes. During the planning stage, the aim should be to collect the following minimum information to aid practitioners in understanding the local context:

- Conflict analysis, including an understanding of local ethnic, racial and religious divisions at the national and local levels;

- Gender analysis, including the role of women, men, girls and boys in society, as well as the gendered power structures in society and in armed forces and groups;

- Media mapping, including the geographic reach, political slant and cost of different media;

- Social mapping to identify key influencers and communicators in the society and their constituencies (e.g., academics and intelligentsia, politicians, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, village leaders, commanders, celebrities, etc.);

- Traditional methods of communication;

- Cultural perceptions of the disabled, the chronically ill, rape survivors, extra-marital childbirth, mental health issues including post-traumatic stress, etc.;

- Literacy rates;

- Prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual and gender-based violence; and

- Cultural moments and/or religious holidays that may be used to amplify messages of peace and the benefits of DDR.

Partners in the process also need to be identified. Particular emphasis – especially in the case of information directed at DDR participants, beneficiaries and communities – should be placed on selecting local theatre troops and animators who can explain concepts such as DDR, reconciliation and acceptance using figurative language. Others who command the respect of communities, such as traditional village leaders, should also be brought into PI/SC efforts and may be asked to distribute DDR messages. DDR practitioners should ensure that partners are able and willing to speak to all DDR participants and beneficiaries and also to all community members, including women and children.

Two additional context determinants may fundamentally alter the design and delivery of the PI/SC intervention:

▪ The attitudes of community members towards ex-combatants, women and men formerly associated with armed forces and groups, and youth at risk; and

▪ The presence of hate speech and/or xenophobic discourse.

In this regard, DDR practitioners shall have a full understanding of how the open communication and publicity surrounding a DDR process may negatively impact the safety and security of participants, as well as DDR practitioners themselves. To this end, DDR practitioners should continuously assess and determine measures that need to be taken to adjust information related to the DDR process. These measures may include:

▪ Removing and/or amending specific designation of sensitive information related to the DDR process, including but not limited to the location of reception centres, the location of disarmament and demobilization sites, details related to the benefits provided to former members of armed forces and groups, and so forth; and

▪ Ensuring the protection of the privacy, and rights thereof, of former members of armed forces and groups related to their identity, ensuring at all times that permission is obtained should any identifiable details be used in communication material (such as photo stories, testimonials or ex-combatant profiles).

6.2 Communicating about former members of armed forces and groups

It is very important to pay attention to the language used in reference to DDR. This includes messaging about the process of disarmament and the 'surrender' of weapons, as well as the terms and expressions used to speak about and to ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups. It is necessary to acknowledge that they are not naturally violent; that they might have left a lot behind in terms of social standing, respect and income in their armed group; and that therefore their return to civilian life may come with great economic and social sacrifices. The self-perception of former members of armed forces and groups (e.g., as revolutionaries or liberty fighters) also needs be understood, taken into consideration and, in some cases, positively reinforced to ensure their buy-in to the DDR process. Taking these sensitives into account may sometimes include the need to reprofile the language used by Government and local or even international media. It is of vital importance, especially when it comes to the prospect of reintegration, that the discourse used to talk about ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups is not pejorative and does not reinforce existing stereotypes or community fears.

Communicating about former members of armed forces and groups is also important in contexts where transitional justice measures are underway. The strategic communication and public information elements of supporting transitional justice as part of a DDR process (including, truth

telling, criminal prosecutions and other accountability measures, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence) should be carefully planned (see IDDRS 6.20 on DDR and Transitional Justice). PI/SC campaigns should be designed to complement transitional justice interventions, and to manage the expectations of DDR participants, beneficiaries and communities. When transitional justice measures are visibly and publically integrated into DDR processes, this may help to ensure that grievances are addressed and demonstrate that these grievances were heard and taken into account. The visibility of these measures, in turn, contribute to improving the the prospects of social cohesion and receptibility between ex-combatants and communities.

6.3 The preparation of PI/SC material

While a PI/SC strategy is being prepared, other public information resources can be activated. In mission settings, ready-made public information material on peacekeeping and the UN's role can be distributed. However, DDR practitioners should be aware that most DDR-specific material will be created for the particular country where DDR will take place. Production of PI/SC material is a lengthy process. The time needed to design and produce printed sensitization tools, develop online content, and establishing dissemination channels (such as radio stations) should be taken into account when planning the schedule for PI/SC activities. Certain PI/SC materials may take less time to produce, such as digital communication; basic pamphlets; DDR radio programmes for broadcasting on non-UN radios; interviews on local and international media; and debates, seminars and public theatre productions. Pre-testing of PI/SC materials must also be included in operational schedules.

In addition to these considerations, the strategy should have a coherent timeline, bearing in mind that while some PI/SC activities will continue throughout the DDR process, others will take place at specific times or during specific phases. For instance, particularly during reintegration, SC activities may be oriented towards educating communities to accept DDR participants and to have reasonable expectations of what reintegration will bring, as well as ensuring that survivors of sexual violence and/or those living with HIV/AIDS are not stigmatized and that connections are made with ongoing security sector reform, including arms control, police and judicial reform.

6.4 Hate speech and developing counter-narratives

Measures must be developed that, in addition to addressing misinformation and disinformation, challenge hate speech and attempt to mitigate its potential impacts on the DDR process. If left unchecked, hate speech and incitement to hatred in the media can lead to atrocities and genocide. In line with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, there must be intentional efforts to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech and to enable effective responses to the impact of hate speech.

Hate speech is any kind of communication in speech, writing, or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they

are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identifying factor. Hate speech aims to exclude, dehumanize and often legitimize the extinction of "the Other". It is supported by stereotypes, enemy images, attributions of blame for national misery and xenophobic discourse, all of which aim to strip the imagined Other of all humanity. This kind of communication often successfully incites violence. Preventing and challenging hate speech is vital to the DDR process and sustainable peace.

Depending on the nature of the conflict, former members of armed forces and groups and their dependants may be the targets of hate speech. In some contexts, those who leave armed groups may be perceived, by some segments of the population, as traitors to the cause. They or their families may be targeted by hate speech, rumours, and other means of incitement to violence against them. As part of the planning for a DDR process in contexts where hate speech is occurring, DDR practitioners shall make all necessary efforts to include counter-narratives in the PI/SC strategy. These measures may include the following:

- Counter hate speech by using accurate and reliable information.

- Include peaceful counter-narratives in education and communication skills training related to the DDR process (e.g., as part of training provided during reintegration support).

- Incorporate media and information literacy skills to recognize and critically evaluate hate speech when engaging with communities.

- Include specific language on hate speech in DDR policy documents and/or related legislation.

- Include narratives, stories, and other material that rehumanize ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups in strategic communication interventions in support of DDR processes.

6.5 Gender-sensitive PI/SC in support of DDR

PI officers and gender officers shall work closely together in the formulation of PI/SC strategies for DDR processes, drawing on existing gender analysis, and conducting additional gender assessments as required. Doing so allows the PI/SC strategy to support gender-equitable norms, to promote women's empowerment and non-violent versions of masculinities, and to combat stigma and socialization to violence (see IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender and DDR).

One of the most critical PI/SC objectives in DDR is reaching WAAFAG and informing them of their eligibility. Ensuring that women are well represented in all PI materials helps prevent their exclusion from DDR processes. Engaging women early in the development and testing of PI messaging is essential to ensuring that communication materials and approaches respond to the specific needs and capacities of women and girls. Recognizing women's roles in peacebuilding and social cohesion, and utilizing opportunities to actively engage them in disseminating PI messages, is

essential. Sensitization activities can provide an important entry point to address the gender dimensions of violence early in the DDR process.

PI activities should capitalize on lessons already learned about how to implement gender-responsive PI campaigns geared towards men. For example, showing male leaders and male youth as strong and non-violent, and men as engaged fathers and partners with females in the community, can help to support both men and boys as well as women and girls.

Through these approaches, PI/SC can support broader gender equality work in the country, ensuring that campaign messages, visuals, and awareness raising activities incorporate gender transformative messages including supporting women's empowerment, men's role as fathers, and non-violent, demilitarized forms of masculinities.

PI/SC interventions and tools should include messaging on:

- Women's and men's roles as leaders working in partnership;

- Demilitarization of masculinities;

- Positive gender norms, including men's roles in communities as fathers;

- Destigmatization of psychosocial support services and individuals dealing with post-traumatic stress;

- Promotion of non-violent behaviour;

- Destigmatization of female combatants, females associated with armed forces and groups and their children, and male combatants;

- Men's and women's mutual responsibility and awareness around reproductive health and HIV/AIDS;

- Women's empowerment; and

- Destigmatization of victims/survivors of sexual violence and their children.

6.6 Anti-stigma and mental health PI/SC in support of DDR

Given the psychological impact of conflict on ex-combatants and persons associated with armed forces and groups, as well as survivors and conflict-affected communities, it is essential for PI/SC to support anti-stigma campaigns and programmes, and to disseminate accurate and reliable information on ways to access support (see IDDRS 5.70 on Health and DDR, IDDRS 5.80 on Disability-Inclusive DDR and IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support).

PI/SC should draw on assessments and mapping of services and be developed in collaboration with health authorities, ensuring continuous access to information on the availability of assistance as well as clear referral pathways (clincs, servies, hotlines etc). Anti-stigma campaigns should include messaging on normalizing the mental health impacts of conflict on both men and women and fostering support for individuals and communities. In conflict settings, one person in five is living with

some form of mental disorder, from mild depression or anxiety to psychosis. In this regard, PI/SC should avoid targeting or singling out DDR participants as the impact of conflict extends further than those who actively participated in combat.z Interventions may include radio programs, public service announcements, community theatre or seminars, print media, and other outlets as outlined in section 8.

7. Stakeholders or target audiences

The planning and implementation of the PI/SC strategy shall acknowledge the diversity of stakeholders involved in the DDR process and their varied information needs. The PI/SC strategy shall also be based on integrated conflict and security analyses (see IDDRS 3.11 on Integrated Assessments). As each DDR process may contain different combinations of DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and reintegration support, the type of DDR process under way will influence the stakeholders involved and the primary and secondary audiences, and will shape the nature and content of PI/SC activities. The intended audience(s) will also vary according to the phase of the DDR process and, crucially, the changes in people's attitudes that the PI/SC strategy would like to bring about. What follows is therefore a non-exhaustive list of the types of target audiences most commonly found in a PI/SC strategy for DDR:

7.1 Primary audience (participants and beneficiaries)

The following stakeholders are often the primary audience of a DDR process:

- *The political leadership:* This may include the signatories of ceasefires and peace accords, when they are in place. Political leaderships may or may not represent the military branches of their organizations.

- *The military leadership of armed forces and groups:* These leaders may have motivations and interests that differ from the political leaderships of these entities. Likewise, within these military leaderships, mid-level commanders may hold their own views concerning the DDR process. DDR practitioners should recognize that the rank-and-file members of armed forces and groups often receive information about DDR from their immediate commanders, who may have incentives to provide disinformation about DDR if they are reluctant for their subordinates to leave military life.

- *Rank-and-file of armed forces and groups:* It is important to make the distinction between military leaderships, military commanders, mid-level commanders and their rank-and-file, because their motivations and interests may differ. Testimonials from the successfully demobilized and reintegrated rank-and-file have proven to be effective in informing their peers. Ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups can play an important role in amplifying messages aimed at demonstrating life after war.

- *Women associated with armed groups and forces in non-combat roles:* It is important to cater to the information needs of WAAFAG, especially those who have been abducted. Communities, particularly women's groups, should also be informed about how to further assist women who manage to leave an armed force or group of their own accord.

- *Children associated with armed forces and groups:* Individuals in this group need child-friendly, age- and gender-sensitive information to help reassure and safely remove those who are illegally held by an armed force or group. Communities, local authorities and police should also be informed about how to assist children who have exited or been released from armed groups, as well as about protocols to ensure the protection of children and their prompt handover to child protection services.

- *Ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups with disabilities:* Information and sensitization to opportunities to access and participate in DDR should reach this group. Families and communities should also be informed on how to support the reintegration of persons with disabilities.

- *Youth at risk of recruitment:* In countries affected by conflict, youth are both a force for positive change and, at the same time, a group that may be vulnerable to being drawn into renewed violence. When PI/SC strategies focus only on children and mature adults, the specific needs and experiences of youth are missed.

- *Local authorities and receiving communities:* Enabling the smooth reintegration of DDR participants into their communities is vital to the success of DDR. Communities and their leaders also have an important role to play in other local-level DDR activities, such as CVR programmes and transitional WAM as well as community-based reintegration support.

7.2 Secondary audience (partners)

In many cases, partnerships with other stakeholders are required to support the design, planning and implementation of the PI/SC strategy. The following partners are often the secondary audience of a DDR process; however, depending on the context, they may also be the primary audience (e.g., the international community in a regionalized armed conflict):

- *Civil society:* This includes women's groups, youth groups, local associations and non-governmental organizations that play a role in the DDR process, including those working as implementing partners of national and international governmental institutions.

- *Religious leaders and institutions:* The voices of moderate religious leaders can be amplified and coordinated with educators to foster coordination and promote messages of peace and tolerance.

- *Legislative and policy-setting authorities:* The legal framework in the country regulating the media can be reviewed and laws put in place to prevent the distribution of messages inciting hate or spreading misinformation. If this approach is used, care must be taken to ensure that civil and political rights are not affected.

- *International and local media:* International and local media are often the main source of information on progress in the peace process. Keeping both media segments supplied with accurate and up-to-date information on the planning and implementation of DDR is important in order to increase support for the process and avoid bad press. The media are also key whistleblowers that can identify, expose and denounce potential spoilers of the peace process.

- *Private sector:* Companies in the private sector can also be important amplifiers and partners, for example, by generating specific recruitment advertisements in support of reintegration opportunities. Local telecommunication companies and internet service providers can also offer avenues to further disseminate key messages.

- *Opinion leaders/influencers:* In many contexts, opinion leaders are public personalities who actively produce and interpret multiple sources of information to form an opinion. With the advent of social media, these actors generate viewership and large followings through regular programming and online presence.

- *Regional stakeholders:* These include Governments, regional organizations, military and political parties of neighbouring countries, civil society in neighboring States, businesses and potential spoilers.

- *The international community:* This includes donors, their constituencies (including, if applicable, the diaspora who can influence the direction of DDR), troop-contributing countries, the UN system, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and think tanks.

8. Media

This section outlines the various media that can be used in PI/SC strategies and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each.

In both mission and non-mission settings, DDR practitioners should proactively identify PI/SC capacities to support national counterparts that are leading the process. Most peacekeeping operations include a PI/SC office with the following work streams and skill sets: media relations, multimedia and content production, radio content or station, and an outreach and campaigns unit. It is important for DDR practitioners to keep in mind that former members of armed forces and groups are not usually a standard target audience within a mission's PI/SC strategy. They may therefore need to engage with the PI/SC office in order for this group to be considered. In non-mission settings, DDR practitioners may seek out partnerships with relevant organizations or explore the possibility of bringing on board or working with existing PI/SC personnel. For example, most agencies, funds and programmes within the UN country team maintain communications officers or individuals with similar job profiles. In all contexts, local advisers shall be consulted.

Once created, PI/SC messages and activities can be channeled using the various media outlined below. The selection of media type should be based on a thorough analysis of the geographic availability of that media, as well as which form of media best suits the content to be disseminated.

8.1 Online and web presence

When internet access is widespread, online tools (videos, dedicated websites, podcasts, social media campaigns, etc.) are important. Social media campaigns should be considered as they represent a low-resource way of reaching a large audience.

8.2 Local, national and international radio stations

When compared with other media, the advantage of radio is that it often reaches the largest number of people, particularly in developing countries. This is because radio is less dependent on infrastructural development or the technological sophistication and wealth of the listener. It can also reach those who are illiterate. However, it should not be assumed that women (and children) have the same access to radio as men, especially in rural areas, since they may not have the resources to buy either the radio or batteries.

A DDR radio programme can assist in providing updates on the DDR process (e.g., the opening of demobilization sites and inauguration of reintegration projects). It can also be used to disseminate messages targeting women and girls (to encourage their participation in the process), as well as children associated with armed forces and groups (for e.g., on the consequences of enlisting or holding children). Radio messages can also support behavioural change programming, for example, by destigmatizing mental health needs (see IDDRS 5.70 on Health and DDR, IDDRS 5.80 on Disability-Inclusive DDR and IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support). Some peacekeeping missions have their own UN Radio stations. In contexts where this is not the case, DDR practitioners should explore partnerships with the private sector and/or civil society.

8.3 Print media

Print media may include leaflets, pamphlets, posters/cartoons, newsletters and magazines. Although the effectiveness of these various formats will be limited by the literacy of the intended audience, their main advantage is the durability and level of detail that printed information can contain. The added benefit of print media is that it can be passed from person to person in close-knit networks, increasing the potential impact of the content as it comes from a trusted source.

8.4 Visual media: television, film and billboards

In countries where television is the most popular way of distributing information, it is essential that this medium is used, even if in a limited way. Some peacekeeping missions have established their own UN TV stations on a dedicated broadcasting frequency, while others have made arrangements to broadcast films, documentaries or other programming on existing public or private stations. The scheduling and frequency of broadcasts must be carefully planned to respond to the needs of the

widest possible audience. Where cultural restrictions prevent women from watching films in public, alternatives, such as a women-only screening, should be negotiated. Billboards should not be overlooked as an effective tool for advertising DDR activities and/or achievements, as, when strategically positioned, they can reach a significant number of people.

8.5 Interactive forums: theatre, seminars, debates

Although the main impact of theatre productions, seminars and debates may be on their direct audience, oral forms of communication have the advantage of involving the audience and building on existing cultural norms. Presenting ideas and concepts figuratively, especially if based on local folklore, culture and humour, can be particularly useful in communities with a strong oral culture. Interactive opportunities like this also afford critical opportunities to support equitable and positive gender norms, destigmatize mental health, and foster peacebuilding and social cohesion. These interactive mechanisms may also help to build social cohesion and work through trauma.

8.6 Local townhall events

Local townhall events that are open to the public can offer a platform for dialogue with communities. They can serve as a wider peacebuilding platform using participatory methods to solicit input from affected populations. They can also provide the opportunity to pre-test messages on a small scale to ascertain their impact and reception before wider use and dissemination.

8.7 Hotlines

Hotlines can be a useful tool to inform DDR participants and beneficiaries about the development of the DDR process. Hotlines should be free of charge and can foster the engagement of the target audience and provide information and clarification on the DDR process.

8.8 Augmented and virtual reality

Augmented and virtual reality techniques can allow partners, donors and members of the general public who are unfamiliar with DDR to immerse themselves in a real-life setting – for example, walking the path of an ex-combatant as he/she leaves an armed group and participates in a DDR process.

8.9 Gamification

Gamification involves the application of typical elements of game playing (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an interactive and social technique to encourage engagement with a topic, such as DDR.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

From the start, it is important to identify measurable indicators (the pieces of information that will show whether objectives are being met) as well as how this information will be gathered (sources and techniques) in order to monitor and evaluate the impact of the PI/SC strategy. Any aspects of the PI/SC strategy that do not have the effect they were designed to achieve shall be adapted. Indicators may include:

- The number, sex, age and location (e.g, rural or urban) of people listening to radio programmes and consulting other media, including websites and social media, that convey messages regarding DDR;

- The number of participants and beneficiaries engaging in the DDR process as a result of PI/SC activities;

- The extent of the involvement of the local civilian population in reintegration programmes as a result of PI/SC efforts; and

- The change in expectations and knowledge about the process among target audiences before and after PI/SC activities.

This information can be gathered through surveys and interviews conducted throughout the implementation of the DDR process and also from the activity reports of other organizations, media reports, staff at the demobilization sites, local civil society actors in the communities, etc. Findings should be used to guide and shape ongoing activities and contribute to improving future efforts. For further information, refer to IDDRS 3.50 on Monitoring and Evaluation.

Abbreviations

CVR	community violence reduction
PI	public information
SC	strategic communication
WAAFAG	women associated with armed forces and groups