

Effect of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants on social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Three quantitative studies assess the effects of DDR programs on ex-combatants' attitudes, political reintegration, and community acceptance, DDR has a small effect on increasing preference for civilian life although the confidence in the study findings is low.

Geographical region: Latin America & Caribbean (1), Sub Saharan Africa (2)

Effect: Small effect ($g = 0.081$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence

Short summary

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs are intended to have an effect on norms and behaviors related to violence amongst armed groups, and support political reintegration. Three quantitative studies examine DDR's impact in Colombia, Burundi, and Sierra Leone. One study finds that ex-combatants' attitudes toward victims' rights are shaped by their combatant roles and security conditions. Another study finds a modest increase in ex-combatants' preference for civilian life. The third study finds that female combatants were more likely to sever factional ties.

Long summary

The intervention

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration brings together reconciliation of ex-combatants, together with security and socio-economic dimensions offering alternative livelihoods. The intervention typically involves removing weapons from combatants' hands, taking Individuals out of militarised structures, and providing them with training for new livelihoods as well as psychosocial support.

There are no studies of PKOs and PSOs in this cell.

How is the intervention is expected to work?

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants may have an effect on the norms and behaviors surrounding violent conflicts and atrocities, including support for political violence or armed groups and attitudes toward the use of violence. By removing individuals from militarized structures, providing livelihood training, and offering psychosocial support, DDR programs may influence ex-combatants' perceptions of violence and political engagement. The effectiveness of these programs may vary depending on combatant roles, socialization into violence, and local security conditions.

The evidence base

There are three quantitative studies in this cell: One study is about Latin America & Caribbean and two studies are from Sub Saharan Africa.

There is one qualitative study in this cell: Bateson (2017) of an intervention in Guatemala.

Evidence findings

Combatant roles negatively affect attitudes toward victims' rights. Commanders often show more negative attitudes, but not significantly so. Ex-combatants who entered armed groups at an older age and so have spent more time in civilian life show greater respect for victims' rights. Members of political paramilitary factions are less likely to express remorse, possibly due to socialization into viewing violence as justified. Ex-combatants living in high-insecurity areas may regret their participation in violence (Daly, 2018). On political reintegration, there was a modest increase in ex-combatants' preference for civilian life over combatant life (Gilligan, 2012). Female combatants were more likely to sever factional ties (Humphreys, 2007).

Included studies

Daly (2018) investigates the determinants of ex-paramilitaries' support for transitional justice in Colombia, based on survey data from 10,951 former fighters. The study analyses the data for ex-paramilitaries to explore the determinants of their support for transitional justice. It examines how factors such as proximity to and acceptance by victimized communities, exposure to justice norms, judicial risks tied to individual culpability, and security risks related to vulnerability to retribution influence their attitudes. By analyzing these variables, the research provides insights into the conditions under which transitional justice mechanisms are likely to gain the support of ex-combatants, offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between socialization, risk, and justice in post-conflict settings. The study is rated low confidence.

DDR can influence social norms regarding violence and atrocities by fostering attitudes of remorse and accountability among ex-combatants, though their effectiveness varies depending on combatant roles, socialization, and local security conditions. The authors report that ex-combatants' attitudes toward transitional justice are influenced by their proximity to victimized communities, the norms of justice they have been exposed to, and the personal risks they face. These findings have significant implications for the effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms in Colombia, particularly with FARC rebels, and for consolidating peace.

Gilligan (2012) assesses the effect of the demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program in Burundi, following its 1993-2004 civil war, particularly on the ex-combatants' economic well-being. The DDR program in Burundi is under the broader Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP). The paper analyses the program's "socioeconomic reintegration package", assessing if the enhancement of economic well-being promotes political integration of these individuals.

The analysis employs a matched comparison of treated and untreated individuals, using regression adjustments and inverse propensity weighting to control for selection bias and exposure heterogeneity. The study sample includes adult (aged 18 years old and above) male former rebel combatants. Respondents were drawn from those who received benefits from three

different nongovernmental organizations, namely Twitezimbere (northern provinces), Planning and Development Collaborative (PADCO, southwest provinces), and Africare (center provinces).

The findings suggest that the program resulted in a 20–35 percentage point reduction in poverty incidence among beneficiaries. Income and livelihood outcomes, including access to skilled and unskilled occupations, also significantly improved.

On political reintegration, there was a modest increase in ex-combatants' preference for civilian life over combatant life. However, no significant effects were found on satisfaction with the peace process or support for current government institutions. The study is rated low confidence.

Humphreys (2007) evaluates the factors that affect the outcomes of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs at a micro-level or individual level, using data from post-war Sierra Leone.

The authors surveyed 1,043 ex-combatants from five major factions in Sierra Leone's civil war, including both male and female participants as well as those who did and did not participate in DDR programs. The analysis employed a quantitative approach, using probit regression models to assess reintegration outcomes across four dimensions: breaking factional ties, employment, community acceptance, and confidence in democratic processes.

Overall, there is no significant effect on three of the four main measures of integration: ex-combatants breaking ties with their faction, acceptance by family and the community, or on the participant views of democracy. The only significant effect is in the wrong direction - being a negative effect on the views of the government.

The findings suggest that participation in abusive factions strongly hindered community acceptance. Female combatants were more likely to sever factional ties, while wealthier and better-educated individuals struggled with reintegration. Meanwhile, poorer individuals reported better employment outcomes. However, DDR participation was not significantly associated with improved economic conditions. Finally, distrust and dissatisfaction with peace agreements negatively affected confidence in democracy, and high-ranking combatants showed significant resistance to democratic norms. The study found little evidence that DDR programs significantly improved reintegration outcomes compared to non-participants.

The study is rated low confidence as attrition rates are not reported.

Confidence assessment

Overall, the study/cell is rated low confidence as there are only three studies, all of which are rated as low confidence..

Other outcomes in the studies in this cell:

- Human security/Economic security
- Community and state governance/Government performance
- Social cohesion/Feelings of trust and acceptance of diversity