

OG 4.50: UN Police Roles and Responsibilities

Objectives

This module will:

- ✓ describe the police component of UN peacekeeping operations;
- ✓ explain how the UN Police can most effectively contribute to DDR; and
- ✓ show how community-based policing can support the reintegration of ex-combatants and their dependants.

1. Introduction

In conjunction with the military component, the UN Police (UNPOL) can provide valuable assistance to DDR. Working closely with the national police, UNPOL can help increase security at the community level, which assists the return, resettlement and social reintegration of ex-combatants and their dependants in the communities of their choice.

The contribution of UNPOL to DDR takes place within the following areas:

- coordination, advice and monitoring;
- encouraging and building up public confidence; and
- reforming and restructuring the national police service.

The mandate given to UNPOL will dictate the level and extent of its involvement in the DDR process. Depending on the situation in the affected country, mandates may vary from monitoring and advisory functions to a fully fledged executive policing responsibility.

There is no standardized approach to determining police support to the DDR process. DDR planning teams should therefore analyse carefully how UNPOL can best contribute to DDR in light of the overall DDR approach and specific country context. UNPOL should participate in DDR planning when necessary, and contribute to the successful implementation of DDR programmes.

2. The police component


Like the military component, UNPOL capacity is based on Member State contributions of human and material resources, as the UN does not have a standing police force.

To better draw on the potential contribution of UNPOL to DDR, it is important first to understand the main function of the police component in a peacekeeping operation and how it is structured:

- *Command and organization:* The Police Commissioner has authority over all UNPOL members deployed in the peacekeeping operation. The UNPOL component is organized in groups and teams. UNPOL teams are commanded on a day-to-day basis by the senior officer in the team, while disciplinary actions are taken by the national commander;
- *Function:* UNPOL can perform a series of security-increasing tasks, depending on the mandate it has received from the UN Security Council. These are: a) monitoring, advising and training national police services in accordance with internationally accepted law enforcement standards; b) maintaining law and order and controlling crime; and c) assisting in police reform, recruitment and training, and institution-building.

UNPOL assistance is necessary because there are common problems affecting national police services that result from conflict situations when compared to national police operating under democratic governance. Table 4.50.1 compares these:

| Functions under democratic governance | Common problems resulting from conflict |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have the monopoly of legitimate force ■ Respect the rule of law, have operational independence and follow a professional code of ethics ■ Provide effective security while respecting human rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are militarized and corrupt ■ Are seriously underfunded ■ Have little capacity to guarantee people's security ■ Have limited or no training to perform their role |

 *During the initial technical assessment that takes place during Phase II of integrated planning, it is important to identify whether national police services themselves should participate in the DDR programme. Police may have been directly engaged in the conflict as combatants or as supporters in armed forces and groups. If this has been the case, keeping the same 'police' in service may be harmful to peace and stability.*


 **OG 3.10 on Integrated DDR Planning: Processes and Structures**

3. UNPOL's involvement in DDR

UNPOL's role in DDR can range from establishing policy frameworks on disarmament, to future regulations on arms possessions, to reforming the national police service, to carrying out community policing initiatives in order to build up public confidence:

Table 4.50.2: Key areas of UNPOL's involvement in DDR

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Advice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Assist local operations commanders in identifying problems of crime and lawlessness■ Assist in intelligence gathering■ Provide advice and training to local officers on short- and longer-term issues of weapons possession |
| Coordination | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Facilitate matters such as site selection for demobilization, brokering agreements with communities and helping ensure community safety■ Identify local concerns and coordinate with the relevant parties to resolve disputes■ Coordinate security arrangements that reassure ex-combatants returning to civilian life■ Assist international and regional police agencies with information sharing and operational planning with regard to arms trafficking, terrorism and other trans-border crimes■ Liaise with national or local police authorities to contain situations of public disorder using minimum force |
| Monitoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Monitor local law enforcement officers' compliance with professional standards of policing■ Observe and monitor any return to military-style activities, and may assist in getting rid of checkpoints and illegal collection points■ Report failure of local officers and the authorities to deal with incidents of non-compliance with or routine violations of the principles of a peace agreement |
| Developing public confidence | <p>Community policing forums are the best way of creating favourable environments for ex-combatants and formerly discredited local police to be accepted back into the community. UNPOL may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ act as a bridge to build up confidence and mutual trust;■ develop local forums and sensitize all parties on the issues of reciprocal care, reconciliation and trust; and■ carry out regular patrols in DDR sites, as this provides a highly visible and reassuring presence to deter crime and criminal activities. |

 *When UNPOL is called upon to engage in police reform and arms possession, it should work closely with UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and bilateral donors on ensuring links with wider justice and security sector reform and arms control strategies.*

4. Community-based policing

In the reintegration stage, and particularly during reconciliation, community policing initiatives have proven to be a very effective means of establishing and sustaining long-term community reconciliation processes. Community policing encourages innovation in dealing with community security concerns, particularly to ensure that the different needs of social actors – women and men, old and young, minorities, disabled people and other special groups – are systematically dealt with. Box 4.50.1 outlines the principles of community policing.

Box 4.50.1: Principles of community-based policing

- Policing is carried out by consent, not by coercion (force).
- The police are part of the community, not apart from it.
- The police and community work together to find out what the community's needs are.
- The police, public and other agencies work together in partnership.
- The business of policing is specifically designed to meet community needs.
- The community is empowered to root out the causes of its social and security problems.
- Diversity in the police force reflects diversity in the community, and meets the needs of different social actors.

Community police forums are the best way to create environments that allow ex-combatants and formerly discredited local police to be accepted back into the community.

UNPOL can act as a bridge to build up and encourage confidence and mutual trust so that communities accept the return of ex-combatants. They act to ensure that all stakeholders are made fully aware that compromises will be essential for the peaceful reintegration of ex-combatants into the community.

Encouraging public confidence is not just about sensitizing and involving the community. There are specific requirements for improving public confidence in the police service:

Box 4.50.2: Requirements for improving public confidence in the police service

- Open access to all police services
- Availability of police services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- A highly visible police presence
- Aggressive public information campaigns
- The creation of public forums and civil society involvement in policing policy and activities
- The representation of minority groups and a balanced ethnic composition in the police service
- The encouragement of gender balance in the police force and gender mainstreaming in all police work



Ex-combatants are highly likely to be involved in domestic violence, sexual abuse and other anti-social behaviour that often characterizes a post-conflict community. To deal with such problems, communities shall be encouraged to work closely with the police. Police shall undergo special training on gender-based violence (GBV) towards women and children, as well as on other hidden social problems.

5. Police reform and restructuring

UNPOL may have a role in police reform and restructuring as part of wider justice and security sector review and reform, which should be closely coordinated with DDR planning and implementation.

Box 4.50.3: Guidance on police reform and restructuring

- Disarmament of the police should take place within the wider processes of arms control and police reform.
- The replacement of military-style weapons with light individual weapons will help pave the way for service-oriented police. However, this should be carried out through careful and intensive education and training, supported by new policy and legal frameworks.
- Depending on the current situation in the country and the UN's mandate, provisions should be made to maintain an interim police force/service composed entirely of the existing police personnel in the country, or UNPOL, which will have legal executive authority until the national police service is re-established.



DDR practitioners shall exercise extreme caution on the issue of integrating ex-combatants into the security forces, particularly the police force, as this can potentially make existing tensions worse. Integration of ex-combatants into the police force shall only be considered as part of wider justice and security sector reform, and shall include a thorough vetting process.

Box 4.50.4: The vetting process in police reform and restructuring

Registration: The registration process should clarify matters by:

- providing an accurate number of active police personnel;
- identifying 'ghost' police officers whose salaries are drawn, but who do not exist in reality;
- allowing the authorities to establish a proper register for prospective police officers' details; and
- allowing police training institutions to properly design and develop training programmes.

Screening: Once the number and type of personnel of the reformed police service have been decided, the screening process:

- should take the form of interviews and formal tests to determine the candidates' literacy standards, and physical and mental condition, and should include background and character checks and authentication of documents; and

- shall be designed to identify any involvement in human rights abuses and war crimes, and any evidence of corruption and unethical conduct, including sexual exploitation, domestic violence and other crimes.

Certification:

- Provisional officers will be certified as members of the reformed police service after they have been through the entire vetting process.
- Certification will be strictly based on the individual meeting recruitment criteria. Once an individual is certified, he/she shall be issued with a service identity card.

6. Summary of key guidance on UN Police roles and responsibilities

- ✓ It is important to understand the areas UNPOL can assist in during the DDR process, particularly in relation to security and trust building at the community level.
- ✓ Community-based policing helps build the trust and confidence necessary for the reintegration of ex-combatants and their dependants into the community.
- ✓ Integration of ex-combatants into the security forces, particularly the police, shall only be considered as part of wider justice and security sector reform, and shall include a thorough vetting process.