

When Peace Excludes:

Gendered Barriers in Demobilization Processes

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Introduction & Overview

Across conflict settings, women’s participation in armed groups is both substantial and increasing.¹ In Ukraine, women now comprise roughly one-fifth of troops, while in Myanmar, women are active in frontline and leadership roles within pro-democracy and resistance groups.² Women’s representation in armed forces rose by 27 percent from 2016 to 2022, while women were present in roughly 63 percent of rebel organizations between 1946 and 2015.³ Yet, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes continue to neglect women—reflecting outdated assumptions about who participates in conflict and who should qualify for reintegration support.⁴

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Implementation gaps remain pronounced despite longstanding commitments under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda—including explicit guidance under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent frameworks.⁵ As a result, DDR efforts repeatedly fail to reflect the modern composition of armed forces and groups. Even where gender provisions exist, they are often not operationalized due to inadequate funding, staffing, or program design. Recent data underscores these challenges. The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security’s (GIWPS) 2025 survey of nearly 3,000 women peacebuilders strikingly found that over half of respondents rated DDR programs as ineffective or neither effective nor ineffective.⁶ These findings point to a persistent disconnect between policy commitments and operational realities.

For practitioners, this gap has direct implications. When women are excluded from eligibility criteria, outreach mechanisms, or reintegration support, DDR programs risk incomplete disarmament, weakened reintegration, and reduced legitimacy within affected communities. These outcomes can ultimately undermine broader stabilization efforts. This report interrogates why gender-responsive DDR is essential for durable security and offers lessons from past practice by identifying three barriers that have prevented DDR from including women effectively: limited awareness of women’s issues, roles, and needs; a lack of socioeconomic transformation; and restrictive gender norms and stigma.

Women in DDR: State of the Field

Since the emergence of DDR as a core component of post-conflict stabilization efforts, recognition of the need for women's inclusion has grown, but this has not universally translated into implementation.⁷ DDR programs continue to prioritize men and boys, reflecting narrow assumptions about who participates in conflict.⁸ Restrictive eligibility criteria—often tied to weapon ownership—systematically exclude many women involved as cooks, intelligence operatives, medics, or dependents.⁹ In Sierra Leone, for example, initial DDR eligibility rules requiring weapon hand-in meant most women—who typically did not possess weapons or were ordered by commanders to give them to male colleagues—were denied access to DDR benefits.¹⁰ Even when formally eligible to participate, women frequently face challenges like community stigma, limited livelihood support, and heightened exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, hindering their ability to fully benefit from DDR.¹¹ Such marginalization perpetuates inequality and can leave key conflict constituencies outside peace and development initiatives, heightening relapse risks.¹²

DDR programs have also struggled to secure community acceptance and protection for returnees from combat, particularly women. Reintegration is too often treated as an individual, technical exercise rather than a collective process embedded in community reconciliation.¹³ This gap can be destabilizing. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, former combatants faced community rejection and targeted attacks, including gender-based violence against women returnees.¹⁴ In Liberia, underfunded vocational training and delays in disbursing reintegration allowances triggered riots among ex-combatants.¹⁵ Women ex-combatants confront gender-specific barriers and threats—such as limited access to protection measures, social ostracization, and economic exclusion—linked to their visibility, shifts in gender roles, and reintegration status.¹⁶ Without gender-sensitive protection measures and community-based reconciliation, DDR programs risk contributing to patterns of marginalization and re-recruitment.

Recognition of these shortcomings at the multilateral and state level has catalyzed the emergence of gender-responsive DDR, which seeks to integrate gender considerations into every stage of program planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.¹⁷ DDR is gender-responsive when it is planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated in ways that account for the specific needs and experiences of women, men, girls, and boys.¹⁸ This approach moves beyond simply “adding women,” instead recognizing how gender norms shape the risks and opportunities individuals face: women may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, while men are often disproportionately targeted for forced recruitment.¹⁹ Guiding principles include promoting gender equality, ensuring non-discrimination and fairness, and centering programs on people rather than armed groups alone. The United Nations' (UN) Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)—the primary operational guidance on DDR—first included gender considerations during its comprehensive revision in 2019.²⁰ Although this was a positive step in recognizing women's inclusion in DDR, implementation continues to fall short in practice.

Integrating gender perspectives into DDR is not only a normative obligation rooted in UNSCR 1325 but is increasingly recognized as an important contributor to program effectiveness and long-term stability.²¹ Where DDR has ignored gender-specific vulnerabilities, reintegration tends to falter and exclusion often perpetuates violence.²² Cross-national research confirms that the strongest predictor of a state's peacefulness is the security and status of women—surpassing standard indicators such as wealth, democracy, or ethnic diversity.²³ States with higher levels of gender equality are less likely to relapse into conflict and more likely to achieve durable economic recovery.²⁴ These patterns are reflected at the programmatic level: a gender-blind DDR process can deepen economic marginalization by restricting

women's access to livelihoods and resources, contributing to the feminization of poverty and increasing vulnerability for women and their children to exploitation and violence from re-recruitment.²⁵ These findings underscore that gender-responsive DDR is a strategic imperative rather than an optional add-on.²⁶

Despite growing recognition of these lessons, gender-responsive DDR has rarely been achieved in practice, even in cases where programs or implementing partners explicitly adopt gender-sensitive approaches. Persistent barriers—ranging from stereotypes to entrenched socioeconomic and cultural obstacles—continue to undermine efforts.

Barriers to Gender-Responsive DDR

Drawing from a global desk-based survey and case-study specific process tracing, three interrelated barriers emerge to implementing gender-responsive DDR: (1) limited awareness of women's participation in conflict and peacebuilding, (2) lack of socioeconomic transformation within DDR programming, and (3) persistent patriarchal norms that marginalize women. These barriers reinforce one another, creating structural obstacles that hinder the design and effectiveness of DDR processes and prevent women and girls from fully accessing and benefitting from these programs.

1. Limited Awareness of Women's Issues, Roles, and Needs

Women's exclusion from DDR programming is typically a challenge from conception. DDR is often created and codified within peace agreements, and therefore reflects the perspectives and power dynamics of those at the negotiation table.²⁷ Women's participation in peace processes remains notably low; between 1992 and 2019, less than 15 percent of negotiators were women.²⁸ This exclusion has direct consequences for DDR.²⁹ Without women at the table, peace agreements frequently define eligibility, benefits, and reintegration pathways through a male-centric lens—prioritizing those who carried arms while neglecting the diverse roles women held within armed groups and in supporting functions.³⁰ Such frameworks implicitly center men as the default combatant and reintegration beneficiary. Across 128 peace agreements containing DDR components, just 8.5 percent of DDR provisions referenced women—and often did so using cursory language.³¹ Beyond peace agreements, DDR can be designed and implemented through unilateral government action, multilateral programming, and even informal community mobilization; however, women too often remain excluded or under-represented from relevant decision-making forums—particularly at early stages.³²

This erasure impedes access to resources at every stage: women may not receive information about DDR programs or eligibility criteria; services may be poorly adapted or even dangerous for women and girls; funding is unlikely to prioritize gender-specific needs that arise from women's differentiated experiences; and monitoring and accountability systems often omit gender-sensitive indicators.³³ As a result, some women are never given the opportunity to opt into DDR, and those who are may still “self-demobilize” rather than enter unsafe or male-dominated processes.³⁴ Those who self-demobilize forgo reintegration benefits such as job training, healthcare, and psychosocial support, which can in turn deepen post-conflict marginalization.³⁵

The lack of gender awareness during DDR planning also manifests as structural barriers to women's access to DDR benefits. When outreach strategies and communication channels are designed to cater to male combatants, women are simply not reached.³⁶ Lower literacy rates, limited access to news or technology,

and restrictions on movement further constrain women’s ability to learn about DDR opportunities that could be relevant to them.³⁷ In many cases, DDR information flows through commanders or local intermediaries—structures that reproduce gender hierarchies and can expose women to exploitation.³⁸

DDR programs often fail to recognize gendered risks women face when attempting to access information and resources. In Liberia, for example, women were excluded due to misinformation and weapon-based eligibility barriers, even after eligibility criteria had been expanded to account for women’s lower rates of weapon possession.³⁹ Some were coerced into sexual exploitation in exchange for access to weapons to “turn in.”⁴⁰ In Sierra Leone, threats from male commanders further deterred women from registering.⁴¹ These cases illustrate how the failure to account for gendered power hierarchies within armed groups and local communities translates into concrete access barriers and heightened vulnerability, perpetuating women’s exclusion from the economic and social benefits of reintegration.⁴²

Even where DDR frameworks formally acknowledge gender, weak institutional awareness and limited accountability mechanisms frequently prevent meaningful implementation.⁴³ If gender provisions are included, they tend to lack operational clarity, dedicated staffing, or budget allocations.⁴⁴ As a result, DDR personnel and implementing partners may lack both the capacity or mandate to translate commitments into practice. Targeted training for DDR personnel, local officials, and implementing partners is therefore essential to embed gender analysis from the outset, alongside monitoring systems that incorporate gender-sensitive indicators and track differentiated outcomes.⁴⁵ Dedicated funding, resourcing, and clear lines of responsibility are critical to ensure such programming moves beyond rhetoric.⁴⁶ Moreover, outreach through women’s organizations and community networks—including mothers’ associations, survivor collectives, and rural women’s cooperatives—can bridge the gap between policy design and meaningful participation.⁴⁷

CASE STUDY: NEPAL

The “People’s War” in Nepal, between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the State, began in 1996 and lasted until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2006.⁴⁸ Women comprised an estimated 30 to 40 percent of Maoist armed fighters and also served as informers, nurses, and logistical supporters for armed groups—with some joining in response to the stated Maoist goal of securing gender equality.⁴⁹ Even so, women were almost entirely excluded from CPA negotiations, which were conducted by male political and rebel elites.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the CPA established a National Monitoring Committee to draft the Interim Constitution, where women held just 2 of 31 seats.⁵¹ Despite demobilization’s centrality to the CPA, the absence of women at the peacemaking stage entrenched a gender-blind DDR framework that failed to recognize women’s combat roles or their specific reintegration needs.⁵²

This neglect translated into structural barriers during implementation. While DDR eligibility did not depend on weapon possession, reintegration pathways relied on criteria such as education and skills, which disadvantaged women who had lower literacy levels or who served in auxiliary roles.⁵³ Designers of the DDR process failed to anticipate that many women would not meet schooling or written exam requirements due to structural barriers to education, thus excluding them from reintegration options such as army integration.⁵⁴ This disparity was reflected in outcomes, as women made up only a small fraction of those who ultimately joined the Nepal Army, with

most instead funneled into cash compensation schemes that often failed to support long-term reintegration, compounded by gendered disparities in rank and benefits.⁵⁵ Conditions in Nepal’s cantonment camps further exposed gender-blind deficits: reports cite inadequate sanitation, limited medical care, and psychosocial distress, while oversight structures lacked women’s representation to demand corrective measures.⁵⁶ In effect, DDR efforts reproduced the same gender inequalities present during the war, centering the experiences and needs of men while overlooking women’s critical contributions.⁵⁷

The consequences of Nepal’s gender-blind DDR continue to reverberate. While the CPA nominally codified commitments to women’s and children’s rights, its lack of specific, gender-responsive DDR provisions—combined with a weak implementation environment—meant these provisions largely went unfulfilled.⁵⁸ This gap left Maoist women struggling with reintegration amid resurgent patriarchal norms, economic precarity, and stigma.⁵⁹ As a result, women ex-combatants experienced “double discrimination” for both their gender and affiliation with armed groups.⁶⁰ In practice, this increased barriers to earning income, as employers in an already discriminatory labor market frequently avoided hiring former female combatants due to stigmatizing perceptions about their morality or behavior. This in turn further impeded their integration and recovery in post-conflict society.

2. Lack of Socioeconomic Transformation

As unemployment and poverty are key drivers of armed group recruitment, DDR programs typically utilize incentives—like skills training, education, and living stipends—to prevent conflict resurgence, support security, and promote reintegration.⁶¹ Yet, entrenched socioeconomic inequalities, combined with gender-blind or discriminatory program design, often prevent women and girls from adequately accessing and benefitting from DDR, even when they are formally eligible to participate.

In such contexts, women’s access to reintegration support may be constrained not only by depleted social services—such as healthcare and childcare—but also by discriminatory property, inheritance, and labor laws.⁶² These legal barriers are particularly significant as armed conflict routinely creates more female-headed households.⁶³ Even when women gain new skills through DDR, their ability to apply them is curtailed by unequal access to land, credit, and markets. Care burdens—especially for children, the sick, and the elderly—and rules barring children from attending DDR programming can additionally limit women’s access to DDR skills trainings and other programming.⁶⁴ Travel may be burdensome or expose women to violence, further deterring participation—especially for those in remote or rural settings.⁶⁵ Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence may also be reluctant to engage in male-led programming due to trauma and fear of harassment or abuse.⁶⁶

Moreover, DDR programs are typically implemented in fragile economies where resources are scarce and men’s reintegration is often prioritized as a presumed security imperative.⁶⁷ Even when women are included on paper, resource constraints may cause gender-specific elements to go unfunded.⁶⁸ As a result, DDR programming often emphasizes employment opportunities for demobilized men and boys, sidelining women—including those who held combat or leadership positions—and accelerating the postwar re-entrenchment of traditional gender roles.⁶⁹

DDR programs are rarely designed in ways that are socially transformative; efforts which lack gender-sensitive design can further reproduce gender norms by steering women primarily toward child-rearing courses or housewife training rather than marketable skills or economic opportunities. In Sri Lanka, for example, women who held senior positions in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were pushed into programs that emphasized homemaking, narrowing their employment and leadership opportunities compared to wartime.⁷⁰ This may be done in part to ensure adequate employment for demobilized men and to affirm “traditional” gender roles.⁷¹ By doing so, DDR programs risk replicating and entrenching women’s socioeconomic marginalization.

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

The 2016 Colombia Peace Agreement, which ended more than 50 years of conflict between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), outlined a transitional strategy including a truth commission, prosecutions, and a DDR program for approximately 18,000 FARC members—an estimated 30 to 40 percent of whom were women.⁷² By July 2017, over 10,000 FARC members had demobilized and enrolled in DDR.⁷³ Unlike most DDR processes, women had groundbreakingly comprehensive participation in the peace negotiations that shaped DDR, and the agreement’s more than 100 gender-related provisions.⁷⁴ Even so, women remain under-represented in DDR enrollment, largely due to persistent socioeconomic and structural barriers. Across programs implemented since 2001, women have comprised just 15 percent of DDR participants—a significant imbalance given their presence in the armed forces.⁷⁵

Although Colombia’s economy is relatively strong compared to some post-conflict states, DDR programs targeting women remain chronically under-financed. Gender-sensitive initiatives have accounted for only a fraction of Colombia’s reintegration budget—limiting women’s access to education, skills training, and employment support and undermining the program’s ability to advance women’s socioeconomic status.⁷⁶ Women combatants also face acute pressure to take up domestic duties rather than employment outside the home.⁷⁷ Many report that despite acquiring new skills and leadership experience during conflict, societal expectations—reinforced by DDR messaging emphasizing femininity, appearance, and caregiving—restrict their economic opportunities.⁷⁸ Such messaging can amplify stigma and gender discrimination when seeking housing and employment, which—alongside lower levels of literacy, education, and certification—drive women ex-combatants into more precarious and potentially exploitative informal and lower-wage employment.⁷⁹ Structural barriers such as limited access to childcare, transportation, and lack of supplementary income for missed wages further constrain participation in DDR programming, particularly for women heads of household and single mothers.

This exclusion risks trapping women associated with armed groups and their children in cycles of poverty. Female ex-combatants’ socioeconomic marginalization may also compound their risk of violence—particularly when they take on community leadership roles—by pushing them to the periphery and cutting off access to resources and reporting. Since 2016, at least 12 women ex-combatant signatories to the peace agreement have been killed—a pattern of violence which has been directly linked to the social and economic marginalization of former combatants.⁸⁰ The Colombian case thus illustrates how socioeconomic constraints, including scarce funding, gendered expectations of labor, and stigma, collectively limit the effectiveness of DDR programs for women and girls.

3. Restrictive Gender Norms and Stigma

Creating gender-responsive DDR programs requires addressing the underlying social norms that shape women's experiences before, during, and after conflict. Patriarchal attitudes often frame women as passive victims rather than active agents or combatants, impacting both community perceptions and DDR implementation. Men are typically associated with ownership and use of small arms and light weapons, which leads many DDR programs to prioritize disarming men while pushing aside women and girls associated with armed groups.⁸¹

DDR programs struggle to leverage empowerment achieved by women amid conflict to lock in long-term progress.⁸² Female combatants often gain practical skills—such as first aid, leadership, or business knowledge.⁸³ Women are also pushed into new roles during conflict, assuming financial or decision-making responsibilities.⁸⁴ Additionally, as more men join or are conscripted into the military, women may become their household's breadwinner—a shift currently observable in Ukraine.⁸⁵ These experiences can expand autonomy and agency, yet they complicate women's experiences of reintegration into patriarchal post-conflict settings that devalue their wartime contributions and re-silo them into traditional roles.⁸⁶

Furthermore, DDR processes often fail to recognize or mitigate the heightened stigma female ex-combatants and armed group auxiliaries face compared to men in these groups. Women who bear arms are frequently seen as deviating from traditional gender roles, while unmarried, widowed, or otherwise stigmatized women—particularly those who had children with fighters—face compounded marginalization as they may be seen as unable to conform to societal expectations.⁸⁷ In Liberia, for instance, DDR officials advised women to conceal their wartime involvement in order to mitigate community ostracism—limiting their access to support networks and hindering community reintegration.⁸⁸ Such stigma can drive women to self-demobilize by opting out of formal DDR processes to avoid exposure and discrimination.⁸⁹ While this may allow safety in anonymity, it prevents access to stipends, training, and employment support, placing them at a structural economic disadvantage. Those who do participate in DDR programs risk being shunned or stigmatized, which can limit their access to housing, credit, and jobs. Many women also migrate to urban areas seeking anonymity, which can disconnect them from the community-based networks on which DDR programs rely for reintegration, leaving them doubly isolated.⁹⁰

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Women forced to marry fighters during conflict may also struggle to access resources, as they are frequently overlooked by both DDR and sexual violence services. Rates of sexual and intimate partner violence commonly rise post-conflict due to the exacerbation of pre-existing discrimination following the breakdown of law and social structures during conflict, with women ex-combatants at heightened risk in part due to their ostracization from community support structures.⁹¹ DDR programs regularly treat these challenges as outside the scope of demobilization, rather than as integral parts of ensuring a secure transition for all.

CASE STUDY: LIBERIA

Following two civil wars (1989–2003), Liberia’s 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement introduced a DDR program for fighting forces, 30–40 percent of whom were female.⁹² Women joined armed groups for multiple reasons, including protection from violence, revenge, and survival, as well as coercion or compulsion through kidnapping and forced marriage.⁹³ Liberia’s DDR program was groundbreaking as the first UN-led initiative to mandate inclusion of female ex-combatants, providing immediate benefits—medical care, food, and cash payments—and long-term support such as vocational training and education.⁹⁴ Liberia’s DDR process also demonstrates the value of inclusive implementation: women’s organizations played a critical role in surfacing unmet needs of female ex-combatants and helping ease tensions at cantonment camps.⁹⁵

Still, deeply entrenched societal attitudes created significant obstacles to meaningful impact and prevented women and girls from accessing resources provided by the program. Women returning from armed groups faced ostracization, particularly if they had experienced sexual violence or bore children with combatants.⁹⁶ This stigma undermined marriage prospects, social standing, and access to DDR resources, creating incentives for women to self-demobilize rather than engage formally. Even where gender-sensitive structures—such as separate healthcare centers and specialized sexual trauma services—existed, the persistence of discriminatory social norms meant women were often deprioritized compared to men.⁹⁷

DDR processes also failed to meaningfully engage with how conflict can exacerbate pre-existing discriminatory norms in ways that harm women and girls—for instance, by considering the link between ex-combatants’ trauma and intimate partner violence. In Liberia, women living in areas with long-term conflict were up to 90 percent more likely to experience intimate partner violence, likely due to the unaddressed toll of conflict and normalization of violence.⁹⁸ While Liberia’s DDR program advanced a gender-inclusive design, the persistence of patriarchal norms and the stigma surrounding women’s wartime roles left many female ex-combatants vulnerable to poverty, violence, chronic health conditions, and marginalization.⁹⁹ This case underscores that even well-designed, gender-responsive DDR programming may fail without concurrent efforts to challenge societal beliefs and establish community-level support for women’s reintegration.

Conclusion & Recommendations

DDR cannot treat gender as peripheral. Across contexts from Nepal to Colombia to Liberia, DDR programs have sidelined women, reinforced structural inequalities, and weakened reintegration outcomes. Even when women are specifically included, socioeconomic barriers, stigma, and discriminatory norms undermine their access to resources and opportunities.

At the same time, emerging practice demonstrates that more inclusive approaches are possible.¹⁰⁰ In Ukraine, sustained advocacy around women’s participation in the armed forces has increased the visibility of women in military roles and advanced calls for tailored, gender-sensitive approaches to veteran reintegration and future DDR processes.¹⁰¹ In Myanmar, although formal DDR processes remain limited, local civil society initiatives have begun to support informal reintegration pathways, including through community-based programs that incorporate women’s empowerment and leadership components.¹⁰²

Together, these cases highlight the potential for more gender-responsive approaches to emerge even in the absence of fully institutionalized DDR frameworks.

In parallel, design and implementation shifts are beginning to transform DDR approaches. Efforts to expand eligibility beyond weapon possession, integrate gender-specific DDR dimensions, and engage men in reshaping harmful masculinities have shown promise in improving reintegration outcomes.¹⁰³ While uneven and often limited in scope, these examples highlight the ability of DDR to adapt and better reflect the realities of conflict-affected communities.

Gender must be mainstreamed across all stages of DDR—not treated as an add-on. This means inclusive eligibility criteria, targeted outreach, accessible services (including childcare and healthcare), and equal access to livelihoods, land, and credit. Gender-responsive DDR is both a normative obligation under the WPS Agenda and a practical requirement for durable peace, economic resilience, and human dignity.

Together, these shortcomings demonstrate that traditional DDR has too often delivered incomplete disarmament, fragile reintegration, and uneven security. By failing to address long-term reintegration, recognize women’s roles, and build community trust, DDR programs have jeopardized their own goals of stabilizing post-conflict environments. These lessons underline the need for a shift toward gender-responsive DDR, which directly addresses these gaps and lays the groundwork for more inclusive and durable peace.

Key Recommendations: The most critical step is ensuring women’s meaningful and sustained participation in conceptualizing DDR programs from the ground-level. This requires women’s inclusion at negotiating tables where DDR programs are often developed. Government and multilateral bodies responsible for DDR must also include women in its internal leadership and within external consultations. Without women’s full participation from the outset, DDR risks reproducing gender-blind structures that fail to account for the needs of women and girls. DDR frameworks themselves must also explicitly recognize female ex-combatants and women associated with armed groups in non-combat roles, ensuring that eligibility criteria and reintegration provisions are drafted in ways that formally include them rather than rendering them invisible in the text. Targeted recommendations by barrier include:

Limited Awareness of Women’s Issues, Roles, and Needs

1. Include women in all phases of DDR—from planning to implementation to evaluation. During the peace and DDR negotiations, decision-making forums should meet the 30 percent benchmark for women’s participation, in line with IDDRS guidance on “Women, Gender, and DDR.”
2. Close data and monitoring gaps to recognize the diverse roles women occupy during conflict, assess the needs of female combatants, and inform international and national commitments and monitoring of DDR.
3. Establish accountability mechanisms with clear, measurable, and public benchmarks to ensure gender-sensitive programming moves from paper to practice.
4. Create specialized gender equality oversight mechanisms as part of DDR program’s implementation and in follow-up to guarantee that gender-sensitive plans translate into effective practice.

Lack of Socioeconomic Transformation

1. Earmark flexible and sustained financing within DDR processes to address the needs of women and girls.
2. Ensure women’s ability to access DDR through gender-sensitive outreach, including in rural settings and for women with limited literacy or digital skills. Mobile services should be used when relevant to reduce travel burdens.

3. Identify and counter barriers to women's participation. Provide childcare, permit children at trainings where appropriate, facilitate safe transportation, and increase the number of women implementers.
4. Design DDR programming that reflects and leverages women's varied skillsets and leadership experience—including that gained during the war—by offering diverse training, education, and livelihood options.

Restrictive Gender Norms and Stigma

1. Identify and assess community and gender-based norms, roles, and stereotypes early in DDR planning, especially regarding female ex-combatants, to mitigate stigma and reintegration challenges.
2. Develop safeguards to ensure women within DDR programs receive psychosocial support, legal assistance, and other basic needs free from stigma, as well as access to trained female personnel when reporting sexual and gender-based violations.
3. Incorporate men and boys—including former combatants, community members and family—as partners in addressing gender stereotypes and promoting acceptance for female ex-combatants' reintegration and empowerment through trainings and other tailored programming.
4. Increase the presence of female leaders and field officers in DDR programming to shift power dynamics and foster safer environments for women to participate and report abuses within the DDR process.

Endnotes

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