

# CHAPTER 1

## DISARMAMENT AND DEMOBILISATION

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### Introduction

Armed with the mixed experience of both success and failure in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes covering more than ten missions, the United Nations (UN) and other parties to the Sierra Leone peace process soon realised that lasting peace in this country could not be achieved without a successful DDR process. This consensus resulted in negotiations for a political settlement, explicitly incorporating DDR in the negotiations. The formal DDR program was framed in the 1999 Lomé Agreement.<sup>1</sup> Although this chapter focuses on the implementation of the disarmament and demobilisation (DD) aspects of the DDR programme in Sierra Leone, leaving reintegration to a separate chapter, an analysis of disarmament and demobilisation needs to fall within the broader challenges of long-term peace-building.

Technically speaking, the first two components of the process are finite, while reintegration is ongoing, complex and its success dependent on a number of interconnected issues that go beyond the formal end of the war. Addressing poverty, unemployment and good governance, restoring and extending government authority, reviving the education system, rebuilding infrastructure, rebuilding the entire judicial system, and rebuilding the economy of a country emerging from war, are challenges that determine the sustainability of peace.

However, despite numerous problems, setbacks and challenges, the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR), and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), conducted a highly successful mission that resulted in Sierra Leone being declared 'disarmed' and the war declared officially over in January 2002.<sup>2</sup>

### Background to the disarmament and demobilisation process

In 1996 the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government set up the Ministry of Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation that was later transformed into

the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR). This commission had a department responsible for the disarmament of the various fighting forces. In July 1998 the department was reconstituted as the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR). The goal of the NCDDR was to consolidate the existing short-term security situation to form a basis for lasting peace.

The realisation that sustainable peace could only be achieved through a comprehensive process of disarming armed groups in Sierra Leone posed its own set of challenges. During the initial stages of disarmament there was a certain level of distrust between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and government about commitment to the DD process. There were also concerns about the prospects for reintegration of ex-combatants once they were disarmed. For many, weapons provided not only a sense of personal significance, but also the only means of accessing the country's resources.

Funds also had to be solicited from donors in order to start the DD process. In addition to UNAMSIL, the NCDDR had to work with a number of partners, including UN agencies, donor governments and international and national non-governmental organisations. The work of the NCDDR depended heavily on donor support, and the World Bank assisted by pooling funds into the Multi-donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for Sierra Leone. The delegation of responsibility to other agencies, such as UNICEF that dealt with child soldiers, proved very effective.

Disarmament initially started in 1998. The responsibility for DDR rests with the NCDDR, which is chaired by President Kabbah and operates with an executive secretariat with the following members:<sup>3</sup>

- Representative from the donor community;
- Minister of Information and Broadcasting;
- Minister of Finance;
- Deputy Minister of Defence (who was the Civil Defence Force coordinator);
- Special Representative of the UN;
- UN Military Force Commander (UNAMSIL); and
- Head of the RUF.

The objectives of DDR in Sierra Leone were:

- To collect, register, disable and destroy all conventional weapons and munitions retrieved from combatants during the disarmament period (which was estimated at three months in the Lomé Agreement).
- To demobilise approximately 45,000 combatants of which 12 per cent were expected to be women.
- To prepare and support ex-combatants for socio-economic reintegration upon discharge from demobilisation centres, for long-term security.<sup>4</sup>

The DDR process was premised on a number of assumptions. Among these were that UNAMSIL would provide security within the framework of its revised mandate; the deployment of UN Military Observers (MilObs); compliance by all parties to the relevant provisions of the Lomé Agreement and the later Abuja Agreement of May 2001; and support from the international community for Sierra Leone.

The disarmament programme run by UNASMIL and coordinated by the NCDDR ran from October 1998 to January 2002, demobilising a total of 72,490 combatants and collecting a total of 42,300 weapons and 1.2m rounds of ammunition.<sup>5</sup> This was a significantly higher figure than the initial estimated number of 45,000 combatants. The disarmament and demobilisation process ran over a period of three phases, with an interim phase added in 2000, divided as follows:

- Phase I: September – December 1998
- Phase II: October 1999 – April 2000
- Interim phase: May 2000 – 17 May 2001
- Phase III: 18 May 2001 – January 2002

The aim of the DDR process was to disarm all belligerent parties, including about 6,000 Armed Forces of Sierra Leone (AFSL), Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Civil Defence Forces (CDF), Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC/ex-Sierra Leone Army) and various paramilitary groups. The primary purpose of disarmament was to dismantle the military apparatus of the RUF and assist it to transform into a political party. This has happened,

with the RUF transforming into the RUF-P that participated in the May 2002 elections.

However, it was realised in the early stages of the DDR process that there were other categories of weapons and armed individuals not covered by the Lomé Agreement. There were general concerns about the presence in the country of more arms that may not have been surrendered during the official DDR process. This led to the creation of the Community Arms Collection and Destruction (CACD) programme (see below).

The final phase of the DDR programme started in the Kambia and Port Loko districts and proceeded to cover the entire country. Tripartite meetings between the government, the RUF, and UNAMSIL, were conducted on a monthly basis in order to assess the level of disarmament and to deal with any problems that might be hindering the process. These meetings had a consultative and consensual tone, which contributed to the success of the DD process. At a tripartite meeting in Bo in early July 2001, the parties resolved to complete the DD process by the end of November 2001, a target that was nearly met.

The process for implementing the DD programme involved selecting a pair of districts to be disarmed simultaneously within a one-month timeframe. After the month the DD process would be declared officially over for these two districts and started in two new districts.

This approach was due to the fact that during the civil war there were concentrations of combatants in certain areas, some of which generated greater distrust and tension between the RUF and government-aligned groups such as the CDF.

The disarmament programme in Sierra Leone was conducted at reception centres around the country during 2001. These reception centres were used for as short a period as was necessary to conduct the weapons registration and collection. The disarmament exercise was conducted in five phases:

- Assembly: Organising the arrival of combatants, and their orientation to the disarmament process.
- Interview: The collection of personal identification, information, registration, and the verification of weapons or ordnance delivered by the ex-combatants.

- Weapons collection: The tagging of all weapons or ordnance, and temporary disabling and storing of the weapons prior to their transportation to the final storage and disposal centres.
- Eligibility certification: Verification and authorisation of the ex-combatants by the UN Observers for their inclusion as beneficiaries of the DDR programme.
- Transportation: The assembly and organisation of screened and disarmed combatants and finally their transportation to demobilisation centres.

Demobilisation was the process by which the disarmed ex-combatants were received and provided with basic necessities. They were further prepared to enter civilian life through the implementation of orientation activities such as trauma healing and psycho-social counselling, information and sensitisation seminars, and civic education. They were provided with transitional allowances (later referred to as reinsertion packages) to support them during the first three months in their chosen places of resettlement. The ex-combatants were eventually assisted with transportation to their respective local communities where they were provided with reintegration services.

Following the completion of DD in Kambia and Port Loko, the process moved to the Kono and Bonthe districts. Here, there were serious concerns regarding the genuine commitment of the RUF to disarmament. However, disarmament proceeded without too many problems and these districts were officially declared disarmed by the end of September 2001. By 3 September 2001, UNAMSIL had already supervised the disarmament of about 16, 057 ex-combatants.<sup>6</sup>

Other districts, however, proved to be more challenging. In the Koinadugu and Moyamba districts, the RUF boycotted tripartite meetings to protest the decision to hold elections on 14 May 2002. The RUF believed that their political party, the RUF-P, was not ready to participate unless certain conditions and demands they had were met. A September tripartite meeting held in Makeni resolved most of the issues of concern and gave new impetus to moving the disarmament process forward. It was also at this meeting that the NCDDR decided to refuse to accept the inclusion of single or double-barrelled guns and locally made hunting rifles as categories of weapons that could be surrendered by ex-combatants. It was agreed that these would be covered in a separate community arms collection programme.

By the time the disarmament of various ex-combatants was declared over, and demobilisation centres closed, the NCDDR had demobilised and discharged a total number of 47,781 ex-combatants and collected 26,001 weapons in Phase III of the programme. Of this total an estimated 33,331 ex-combatants have registered for reintegration opportunities in the various sectors with the NCDDR district and regional reintegration offices (see Chapter 2). This culminated in the symbolic burning of almost 3,000 weapons on 18 January 2002 at Lungi Town, in a ceremony to mark the end of the war in Sierra Leone.

Despite being relatively successful in meeting its objectives, the DD process faced numerous challenges and experienced various setbacks linked to the political climate in the country. Although different districts presented different challenges there were generalised problems.

Some of the major problems resulted from poor conditions in the demobilisation camps, and ex-combatants not receiving their entitlements in due time.

**Table 1: Total disarmed and demobilised, by district**

District	RUF	CDF	Others	Total
Bo	17	3,755	0	3,772
Bombali	4,049	110	20	4,179
Bonthe	0	1,246	0	1,246
Western Area	155	1,972	163	2,290
Kailahun	6,115	1,694	40	7,849
Kenema	1,660	3,048	30	4,738
Kolnadugu	317	1,205	30	1,552
Kono	3,730	2,255	38	6,023
Moyamba	1	2,938	0	2,938
Port Loko/Kambia	1,680	5,595	126	7,401
Pujehu	0	2,962	0	2,962
Tonkolli	1,543	1,271	16	2,830
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>19,267</b>	<b>28,051</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>47,781</b>

\*\*Based on actual forms received from UNAMSIL and processed by the ES-NCDDR (as at 18/02/02)

<b>Type</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hand weapons	7,785
Assault weapons	17,180
Group weapons	1,036
Ammunition	935,495
Source: NCDDR, August 2002	

UNAMSIL intervened in some of the problems. For example, in Kovehun, ex-combatants refused to leave the camp without their benefits, in the form of identification cards and travelling allowances, although the camp was at capacity. This stalled the programme as additional accommodation had to be found for new intakes.

At Gandorhun, CDF-instigated disturbances in August 2001 caused the reception centre to be closed, resulting in delays to the process. The dispute was apparently related to the surrender of hand grenades, rocket propelled grenades, and mines, which were classified as ammunition under the NCDDR disarmament guidelines, and not as weapons. The CDF objected, wanting them to count as weapons, but the dispute was resolved after UNAMSIL intervention.

There were other problems associated with a lack of trust between the RUF and the CDF, which also had an impact on the pace of disarmament. It was in part due to the diplomatic skills of UNAMSIL that the continuation of the DD process was on occasion ensured.

## **Community arms collection and destruction**

The Community Arms Collection and Destruction (CACD) programme was aimed at collecting arms that were defined as not being part of the DDR process, such as hunting rifles and pistols, and weapons in the hands of non-combatants. The programme was managed by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) with the assistance of UNAMSIL. One motivation for the programme was the RUF's concern that the CDF still held shotguns and feared these might be used against them. Shotguns were not included as a category for collection during the formal disar-

mament process. Other motivations included the desire to reduce the availability of weapons in the country as much as possible, and to recall legally held firearms owned by civilians while new laws were implemented.

The CACD programme, covering the entire country, started on 1 December 2001 and was divided into three phases. Phase I targeted the western area, covering the Port Loko and Kambia districts in the northern region and the Moyamba district in the south. Phase II covered the Bombali, Koinadugu and Tonkolili districts in the north and Bonthe in the south, whilst Phase III covered the Pujehun, Kenema, Kailahun and Kono districts in the eastern region.<sup>7</sup>

The programme retrieved approximately 9,660 weapons and 17,000 rounds of ammunition. Weapons collected included shotguns, pistols, bombs and other explosives.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the amnesty period, which was parallel to the CACD programme, it became illegal to possess arms in the country. The Sierra Leone police conducted limited cordon and search operations in collaboration with communities, in order to recover illegally held firearms after the amnesty period expired.

## **Disarmament and demobilisation in Kono**

### ***Sector 5: Kono and Kailahun***

Kono district, in the eastern part of the country, forms part of sector 5 under the operational responsibility of the Pakistani command (see Chapter 3). This sector consists of three battalions spread over three districts. Sector 5 was perceived to be central to the long-term stability of Sierra Leone, as it contains the Kono diamond fields and was at the heart of rebel activity during the war. The successful disarmament of the district held very significant implications for confidence building in the rest of the country. As the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) commented during the September 2002 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) visit to the sector:

“The choice of Kono (for the visit) is to symbolise the importance which not only you in Sierra Leone, but the entire international community, attach to the disarmament of Kono.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus the symbolic staging of arms destruction and the high-level visit was aimed at maximising the impact of the message that “if Kono can disarm so can the rest of Sierra Leone”. Despite remaining problems associated with illegal mining,

which falls outside the mandate of UNAMSIL, calm has largely returned to the area and no significant incidents of armed violence have been reported.

The Pakistani contingent in sector 5 was involved with the DD process until January 2002, when it was declared officially ended. Disarmament covered areas in Koidu, Yengema, Daru, Kailahun, Buedu and Pendembu.

Disarmament in the sector also included the CACD programme that commenced shortly after official disarmament was declared over, with the Pakistan contingent supporting the SLP in its work.

**Table 3: Disarmament statistics for Kono**

RUF	3,747
CDF	1,995
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,742</b>

\*Covering the period 25 May – 17 August 2001

Source: Sector 5 briefing to the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), August 2002.

**Table 4: Disarmament statistics for Kailahun**

RUF	5,128
CDF	1,158
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,286</b>

\*Covering the period 15 November 2001 – 11 January 2002

Source: Sector 5 briefing to the ISS, August 2002.

**Table 5: Total disarmament statistics for sector 5**

RUF	8,875
CDF	3,153
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,028</b>

Source: Sector 5 briefing to the ISS, August 2002.

## ***CACD programme***

The CACD programme in sector 5 commenced on 3 February 2002, by arrangement with the SLP. The completion deadline was extended from 28 February to 31 March 2002. The CACD programme met with a strong positive response from the community. The support the community provided to the SLP and UNAMSIL showed that people were tired of the fighting and were beginning to develop a certain level of trust in government authority. The number of weapons retrieved was symbolically significant as it signalled that people were not willing to encourage arms proliferation in their communities.

**Table 6: Weapons collected – CACD programme**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Shotguns</b>	<b>G-3</b>	<b>7mm</b>	<b>Pistols</b>
Koidu	189	1	1	0
Kailahun	215	0	0	2
Daru	632	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,036</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: Sector 5 briefing to the ISS, August 2002.

Although DD has been completed in sector 5 and the area seems technically disarmed, outstanding issues remain, including the rising sectarianism in Kono and the larger post-election security challenges (see Chapter 6).

## ***Arms destruction***

Increasingly, UN missions are unwilling to permit the long-term storage of weapons surrendered during peacekeeping operations. The failure to properly store, document and destroy arms in custody after disarmament raises the prospect that the weapons may end up re-circulating in the country. UNAMSIL had legitimate concerns about the capacity of the Sierra Leone government to safely store collected weapons. This resulted in an agreement with the government that all weapons collected as part of the DDR process would be destroyed. In sector 5, for example, UNAMSIL and NCDDR worked with NGOs to destroy weapons. In general UNAMSIL took responsibility for the

destruction of ammunition and explosives, some of which were highly unstable when they were handed in.

The destruction of weapons was done with the non-governmental organisation, German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ), which has developed a competency in destroying weapons, mainly through cutting the weapons into smaller pieces and rendering them inoperable. These pieces were then made into productive tools.<sup>10</sup> Some 25,089 weapons have been destroyed through this process.<sup>11</sup>

## Disarmament and demobilisation – a success?

After multiple phases and a demanding four years, the DDR programme in Sierra Leone has disarmed and demobilised 72,490 combatants, and collected and destroyed 42,300 weapons and 1.2m pieces of ammunition. By all standards the DD component of the larger DDR process can be said to have been successful. The statistics below clearly show the phenomenal achievement of the NCDDR, in partnership with UNAMSIL, in conducting a successful exercise of DD that created conditions conducive to peace and stability in

**Table 7: Total disarmed, by group**

<b>Category disarmed</b>	<b>PHASE I (Sep–Dec 1998)</b>	<b>PHASE II (Oct 1999– April 2000)</b>	<b>Interim Phase (May 2000– 17 May 2001)</b>	<b>Phase III (18 May 2001– Jan 2002)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>RUF</b>	187	4,130	768	19,267	24,352
<b>AFRC</b>	0	2,129	445	0	2,574
<b>Discharged/ Ex-SLA</b>	2,994	2,366	593	0	5,953
<b>CDF</b>	2	8,800	524	28,051	37,377
<b>OTHERS (including paramilitary)</b>	0	1,473	298	463	2,234
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>18,898</b>	<b>2,628</b>	<b>47,781</b>	<b>72,490</b>

Source: NCDDR, August 2002

Sierra Leone. It is largely due to the success of DD that Sierra Leone was able to hold 'free and fair' elections in May 2002, marked by an unprecedented level of calm across the country.

**Table 8: Total disarmed children and adults**

	PHASE I	PHASE II	INTERIM PHASE	PHASE III	TOTAL
<b>Children*</b>	189	1,982	402	4,272	6,845
<b>Adults</b>	2,994	16,916	2,226	43,509	65,645
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>18,898</b>	<b>2,628</b>	<b>47,781</b>	<b>72,490</b>

\*Child combatants did not require weapons to join the DDR programme  
Source: NCDDR, August 2002

**Table 9: Total demobilised children and adults**

	Phase I	Phase II*	Interim Phase	Phase III	Total
<b>Children</b>	189	1,982	402	4,272	6,845
<b>Adults</b>	2,994	15,469	2,226	43,509	64,198
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>17,451</b>	<b>2,628</b>	<b>47,781</b>	<b>71,043</b>

\*1447 AFRC/Ex-SLA disarmed but did not demobilise because of desire to return to the National Army.  
Source: NCDDR, August 2002

**Table 10: Total discharged children and adults**

	Phase I	Phase II	Interim Phase	Phase III	Total
<b>Children</b>	189	1,982	402	4,272	6,845
<b>Adults</b>	1,414	15,469	2,226	43,509	62,618
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,603</b>	<b>17,451</b>	<b>2,628</b>	<b>47,781</b>	<b>69,463</b>

Source: NCDDR, August 2002

<b>District</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bo	112	3,660	3,772
Bombali	681	3,495	4,176
Bonthe	310	936	1,246
Western Area	127	2,163	2,290
Kailahun	830	7,019	7,849
Kenema	239	4,431	4,670
Koinadugu	345	1,207	1,552
Kono	628	5,395	6,023
Moyamba	313	2,626	2,939
Port Loko/Kambia	416	6,985	7,401
Pujehun	1	2,961	2,962
Tonkolili	268	2,562	2,830
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>4,270</b>	<b>43,440</b>	<b>47,710</b>

Source: NCDDR, August 2002

## **Achievements in disarmament and demobilisation**

To a degree that surprised many observers, the DD process in Sierra Leone after May 2001 went off smoothly and largely according to plan. Some of the key achievements are summarised below.

- Institutionally, the NCDDR was able to design a flexible policy framework that was able to accommodate the complexities of the Sierra Leone political process without compromising the objectives of DDR.
- The NCDDR was able to initiate ‘targeted disarmament’, and delegated responsibility to relevant agencies such as UNICEF who dealt with child soldiers.
- UNAMSIL provided expertise and committed resources in the establishment of cantonment centres in the country.

- UNAMSIL was instrumental in mediating collaborative strategies that included subcontracting arms destruction to the German NGO GTZ.
- Subcontracting GTZ to destroy arms, and ensuring that this was witnessed at community level, increased people's confidence in the merits of disarmament.
- The NCDDR managed to set up a realistic programme by acknowledging the need to broaden DD through the CACD programme, and thereby sustaining their own work through a long-term communal process.
- The reduction of the encampment period from 21 days to 7 days speeded up the process of demobilisation.
- Disarming over 70,000 ex-combatants contributed significantly to improving the security situation in the country and created an environment conducive to peaceful elections.

## Conclusion

Although the DD phase was officially over, and all parties involved, especially the NCDDR, the government of Sierra Leone, the RUF and UNAMSIL, played a major role in ensuring its success, there were various obstacles that needed to be addressed. Although some of these were technical issues, such as the issuing of identification cards, most were intrinsically linked to the politics of the peace process, as was evident in May 2000.<sup>12</sup> The primary lesson learned from disarmament and demobilisation in Sierra Leone was that putting a DDR programme on the peace agenda must take into account the financial, logistical and technical issues associated with the objectives and scale of the programme, and be mindful that such objectives depend largely on the political process.

Other challenges faced by the DDR process were direct consequences of the nature of the conflict between the RUF and the government. In some districts there were problems regarding disarmament, where both sides (the RUF and CDF) were reluctant to disarm without simultaneous surrendering of arms by the other. These tensions were more evident in some districts than others, determined by the distribution of the forces and their concentration in a particular district. At times, the NCDDR failed to deliver entitlements, such as identification and travel allowance, to ex-combatants, resulting in setbacks to the DDR process, and increasing tensions in the camps.

The issue of reintegration, which will be critical to the long-term peace and stability of Sierra Leone, cannot be removed from any analysis of Sierra Leone. The next chapter undertakes a thorough review of the ongoing reintegration programme in the country.

## Notes

- 1 Controversy surrounded the 1999 Lomé Agreement, which was perceived by some as being too lenient to the RUF by giving their leader Foday Sankoh and the rebels immunity from future prosecution for atrocities committed during the war.
- 2 At the eighth 'Tripartite Meeting' of the Joint Committee on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) comprising representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone, the RUF and UNAMSIL held in Freetown, both DDR and the war were officially declared over in the whole of Sierra Leone.
- 3 M Malan, P Rakate, A McIntyre, (eds), *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: UNAMSIL hits the home straight*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Monograph no 68, January 2002, p 45.
- 4 Interview with Colonel Kamal from UNAMSIL DDR Unit, August 2002.
- 5 *UN strategy to support national recovery and peace-building in Sierra Leone 2003–2007*, Draft 24 June 2002, p 7.
- 6 M Malan, op cit, p 46.
- 7 P Coker, Mopping up weapons in local communities, *UNAMSIL Review*, United Nations, April 2002, p 9.
- 8 Ibid. p 9.
- 9 SRSG speaks on ECOWAS leaders' visit to Kono, *UNAMSIL Review*, United Nations, December 2001, p 8.
- 10 See Government of Sierra Leone and World Bank, *Sierra Leone Disarmament and Demobilisation Program Assessment Report*, July 2002, p 6.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 On 2 May RUF forces attacked the UNAMSIL positions in Makeni and Magburaka, killing four Kenyan soldiers and wounding four others. The attackers captured about 50 other UNAMSIL personnel. By the end of 5 May about 500 UN personnel were in RUF captivity. This crisis caused embarrassment for the UN and prompted calls for rapid action to deal with the RUF, who were not seen as spoilers. In addition to the capture of UN personnel, an RUF splinter group calling itself the West Side Boys kidnapped 11 British soldiers and an SLA liaison officer, resulting in Britain's military assault that resulted in the freeing of the

hostages. The consequences of the ensuing political stalemate and renewed fighting in the country affected the entire peace process and DDR in particular, and was finally resolved with the signing of the Abuja II Agreement that kick-started the peace process.

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