



Lessons Learned from Cantonment Exercises within DDR Processes

Non-paper by the Disarmament, Demobilization
and Reintegration Section

1. Cantonment has been part of the DDR toolbox since the 1990s when the first DDR-related mandate was given to the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA, S/Res/653(1990)) in support of the demobilization of the Nicaraguan Resistance. The demobilization occurred in the so-called “security zones”, eventually – and only for a period of time – protected by ONUCA military component. These zones were de facto cantonment areas surrounded by 20-km demilitarized zones. Noteworthy for this paper is that the demobilization occurred voluntarily, not as a result of a defeat in the conflict.

2. The Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS module 4.20 on Demobilization) currently consider DDR activities (demobilization) in cantonment as an option, making a difference between semi-permanent and temporary sites allowing for a processing of larger number of combatants and associated personnel and offering some structured training opportunities. Mobile units are another alternative which is better suited to dispersed groups of combatants mainly living within their communities and which avoids risks of bringing a large number of armed personnel to a common location. (an outcome that at times may lead to the transfer of conflict or instability from one area to another. .)

3. Cantonment is less relevant for reintegration, even if some reinsertion/reintegration activities such as basic training may happen in cantonment sites. This is because, at its core, reintegration is about bringing people back to their communities (or creating for them conditions to peacefully function in other host communities). Because of that, whether individual or community-based, reintegration is better off when conducted for limited groups of beneficiaries close to or within those communities.

4. All in all, cantonment is a planning choice and must follow a detailed analysis of the context, including conflict dynamics, military strength of warring parties, geographical practicalities and the identification of the theory of change i.e. the identification of positive impact expected to be added by cantonment to the overall DDR process or, broader, to peace and security in the country. Because benefits of cantonment usually are at least partially offset by related risks, a decision on using cantonment should also be based on a cost-benefit analysis demonstrating that the benefits of cantonment will outweigh the risks, thus making cantonment a preferred choice.

5. This non-paper is developed in relation to the language on cantonment added by the Security Council to the provisions of DDR in its resolution 2605(2021) extending and expanding the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) but is not directly addressing the situation in CAR. Rather, it provides lessons learned on cantonment in other contexts, looking at both opportunities and risks of the cantonment approach and formulating a set of principles to inform any planned cantonment exercise. Anchored in lessons learned, it will examine the two key aspects of any cantonment activity – security and cost, then look at other principal opportunities and risks of cantonment exercises.

Principles

- **Cantonment is a planning choice and should be based on a detailed analysis identifying the issues that cantonment is supposed to solve or benefits it is supposed to bring to the overall DDR process (theory of change) and on a cost-benefit analysis determining whether the benefits of cantonment would outweigh the risks.**

Safety and security

6. When interviewed for an article in 2004, Kelvin Ong, the then Head of DDR Section in the United Nations Headquarters, said that as a former soldier”, he worried about “assembling large number of nervous combatants in DDR camps”¹. As “do no harm” is an overarching guiding principle of DDR, the analysis of the safety and security impact of a cantonment site potentially regrouping large number of combatants is the first consideration. This includes potential positive security impact of combatants staying within protected and monitored perimeters (cf. Box 1. Mali for the use of cantonment site as an enabler of holding peaceful elections), security considerations of both people inside the camps (they can become a target (cf. Box 2. Nepal) a factor that may prove critical in CAR where armed groups are

Box 1. Mali

The cantonment approach was **used as a confidence building measure aiming at facilitating further progress in the political negotiations and enabling the holding of the presidential elections in July 2013** – in a similar way as CVR (pre-DDR) was used in CAR. It was a proposal to end a standoff between the Government asking for a full disarmament of the *Mouvement National de Liberation de l’Azawad* (MNLA) as a pre-condition for negotiations and the MNLA blunt rejection of such conditionality. Four basic options were explored: (i) encampment of MNLA combatants and weapons storage in MINUSMA provided camps, (ii) regroupment and monitoring of MNLA combatants and weapons in designated areas, (iii) temporary assembly and registration of MNLA combatants and storage of weapons in designated locations, and (iv) restriction of movement of MNLA combatants in their current positions. **Discussions on the implementation of the cantonment process helped keep positive momentum for political negotiations.**

While the cantonment process started with the light options (iii and iv), as the Government was making political concessions in the peace process on key aspects such as granting more autonomy to the regions in the North of the country, including the creation of a territorial police and the elaboration of a specific economic development plan for the regions in the northern part of Mali, the more the Government was pushing for option (i) the encampment/cantonment of combatants. As discussions evolved, new armed groups emerged and formed two major coalitions who finally signed with the Government the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, which highlighted the cantonment of signatory armed movement as a key step. After long discussions, MINUSMA supported the establishment of eight semi-permanent cantonment sites, which remain however unused so far, as signatory parties decided to start the DDR process with the implementation of the Accelerated DDR and Integration (ADDR-I) operations aiming at facilitating the integration of ex-combatant into the Malian Defense and Security Forces. Currently, four main Government provided cantonment sites are being used to implement the ADDR-I operations.

The construction of the eight cantonment sites was financially and logistically costly (approximately USD 1 million per site), but politically necessary to maintain positive momentum for the political negotiations. At the same time, through the construction of these sites, the Mission gained leverage in fostering progress, albeit slow, on the implementation of the Defense and Security provisions of the Peace Agreement, particularly on DDR, which was the area of the Peace Agreement that consequently saw the most noticeable progress of all areas of the Agreement. Above all, the Malian parties could no longer blame MINUSMA for not effectively supporting the implementation of the peace process.

¹ Sami Faltas, DDR without Camps: The Need for Decentralized Approaches: Topical Chapter for the Conversion Survey (Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2005)

At the operational level, the construction of these sites contributed to buying time for operational planning for DDR, which allowed for the swift launching of the ADDR-I operations. In addition, the possibility of having a dedicated cantonment site where combatants could be processed and hosted for a short to a medium period contributes to the change in status of combatants, which is a key element in a DDR process. In the case of the ADDR-I, combatants of the signatory armed movements are transitioning from “being combatants of the armed movements” to “elements of the *Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination*” to eventually become “soldiers of the reconstituted units of the Malian Defense and Security Forces”. The benefit of the cantonment sites separating those ex-combatants from their former comrades should not be overlooked, mainly when the National Defense and Security Forces are very reluctant to integrate these new recruits.

targeted by “bilateral forces”, and within the community that becomes vulnerable when an assembly of combatants is located in vicinity. Cantonment sites also offer better protection in situations where combatants and personnel supporting the DDR process, including the UN staff, may be targeted by spoilers (e.g. by armed groups designated as terrorist organizations) intending to threaten or undermine DDR and peace process.

7. Security can be understood as hard security i.e. physical protection of the perimeter or the presence of armed peacekeepers or national security forces around the location of the cantonment site. But soft security, having more to do with the perception of insecurity inside the communities surrounding cantonment sites is equally important. In both cases, hard and soft security enhancement activities should

Box 2. Nepal

In 2006, the government of Nepal signed a peace agreement with the Maoist insurgency in the country. 23,000 Maoist combatants were cantoned in seven sites. Weapons were stored in locked containers within the sites but not removed or destroyed.

Inside the cantonment, conditions were relatively good, with full board, a monthly stipend paid by the government, and basic infrastructural support and utilities. This had the unintended consequence that the ex-combatants preferred to stay in the cantonment sites instead of moving forward with DDR, leading to multiple years of political stalemate.

The Nepal example demonstrated that challenges associated with operating cantonments for combatants – especially before formal disarmament – can outweigh the benefits. Cantonments can give rise to major security threats, as they offer a concentrated target; and an opportunity for the cantoned military groups to consolidate and to train.

be planned for and funded. Issues to take into consideration on “soft” security include activities for combatants inside the site (whether capacity-building or pastimes) which would prevent them from venturing outside in search of entertainment. It is also important to mitigate any perception of insecurity by creating communication mechanisms between representatives of the combatants in the site, security personnel and the local community and its leaders. In South Sudan in 2011-13 (cf. Box 3), a set of “reinsertion” (de facto Community Violence Reduction) projects were implemented by UNMISS in communities where cantonment sites were to be located as a measure to win their “hearts and minds” and offset possible security implication of the ex-combatants assemblies in the vicinity. Similarly, in Mali, when the cantonment sites were constructed, MINUSMA has implemented CVR projects in communities surrounding the cantonment sites.

8. Disarmament and handling weapons and ammunitions in cantonment sites is

another security consideration. Should combatants arrive at the site with their weapon to hand it over during disarmament, a protected assembly (or waiting) area should be considered as armed combatants waiting for the admission may become a threat to the neighboring population. Weapons should be swiftly removed from the cantonment area which assumes the existence of safe storage spaces at a reasonable distance. In most instances, (cf. Colombia) the disarmament site is located away from the cantonment site, which is a recommended practice.

9. An important security consideration, especially in an environment with a large fragmentation of armed groups, is bringing together in a cantonment site of elements of different armed groups who start living and working together. This can have various types of impact, including potential factional violence between elements in cantonment sites. The authors of a recent lessons-learned article point out that “experience shows that an encampment period for rival parties with deep levels of mistrust is likely to create a fertile ground for mutiny.”² But there might also be other unintended consequences e.g. various factions in cantonment could solidify into one structure, possibly enhancing its fighting capacities compared to the sum of its parts.

Principles

- **Safety and security should be a primary consideration when establishing a cantonment site, based on a thorough analysis of the security impact of the cantonment site as well as of the combatants’ movements in and out and accompanied by a plan of offsetting measures.**
- **Local coordination mechanisms between all stakeholders of the cantonment process should be established to address any concerns – real or rumored – that any of the stakeholders may raise.**

Cost

10. Cost of the cantonment sites can vary but a number of factors such as accessibility, security and logistical considerations may significantly increase it (cf. Box 1. Mali with the estimated cost of USD 1 M per site). What is more, the structure of the cost is inflexible with an important front investment needed to launch the site (construction, purchase of training and other equipment, ensuring access to water and hygiene facilities etc.) with a reasonable return of investment only in cases where a large number of combatants pass subsequently, over a long period of time, through the site. The front investment needed does not yield easily to small-scale pilot or demobilization activities and may potentially go to waste unless a large-scale cantonment process occurs.

11. In comparison, the costs of mobile units, have a much more flexible and predictable structure as each intervention of mobile units can be planned and funded separately and most importantly does not entail the risk of an open ended process with all the associated costs. One key consideration from the perspective of any entity supporting cantonment is that the commitment to funding is for the whole duration of the stay of the combatants, and sometimes also for periods where no activities are held in the

² Babiker, Mohammed & Ozerdem, Alpaslan. (2003). A future disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process in Sudan: lessons learned from Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda. *Conflict, Security & Development*. 3. 211-232.

cantonment sites to avoid their fall in disrepair. Box 4. refers to the experience of DRC in this regard, where the two cantonment sites gradually devolved into degrading living conditions.

Box 3. South Sudan (2011-13 and 2018)

While the DDR process in South Sudan was interrupted after the implementation of the pilot program due to the outbreak of the internal conflict, certain lessons can be learned from that context. The Government planned for a cantonment site in each of the 10 States of South Sudan, of which at the time of the 2013 conflict, three were at least partially completed. The location of the sites were decided by the Government who had tactical considerations in mind (post DDR use as Sudan People Liberation Army, SPLA, training or barracking sites). Consequently, the locations were not easily accessible and lacked necessary infrastructure (e.g. access to potable water in one case). This, compounded with the Government insistence on the construction of hard-wall structures for the “heroes of the independence” as opposed to tent-based habitation, increased the cost of construction and the overall cost of DDR, which later on became a crown argument against any DDR in South Sudan.

To gain acceptance of the population for planned DDR centers, UNMISS has implemented “reinsertion” (de facto CVR) projects in three locations: Mapel, Pariak and Torit, providing the local population with community benefit projects (such as the construction of schools, marketplaces and even a prison house in Mapel) as requested by the population. The actual impact of those projects could not be measured due to the short-lived nature of DDR, but initial conclusions included increased awareness of the local population on the plans for DDR in the area and increased acceptance of the sites.

Being granted new land for cantonment sites where there were no pre-existing structures also opened some opportunities. For example, the cantonment site in Mapel was large enough to not only host sufficient spaces for skill-building activities for different crafts, but included a sample farm land where agricultural activities could be taught – something that usually requires a separate plot of land.

2018 cantonment process

The Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) from September 2018 also stipulates the assembly and cantonment of forces to enable registration of personnel, weapons and equipment accountability, screening, re-organization and/or disarmament and demobilization. Forces in cantonment would receive non-military logistical supplies including food, shelter and access to medical care. While the cantonment process was supposed to last only several months, until the national army has been created, the process has dragged out for more than three years. Because of the experience from the previous DDR process, the donors have been reluctant to finance the peace agreement and especially DDR programme, and the funding shortages have particularly affected the cantonment sites. There have been reports of combatants having starved to death in camps, and lack of food, adequate shelter, medicine, and water has pushed majority of soldiers to leave the camps and return to their villages. South Sudan's transitional unity government is now starting the screening process for the graduation of the first batch of unified forces and is calling on soldiers who deserted cantonment sites over the past months, to report back, pledging to provide necessary logistics and food in training centers.

Principles

- **Cantonment should be based on reliable funding sources secured in advance.**

- **Duration of stay of combatants in cantonment sites should be pre-defined, limited to the necessary minimum and strictly enforced, with clearly defined and funded “exit strategy” This will allow, among broader benefits for the DDR process, maximum possible control of resources.**

Planning considerations supporting a cantonment option

12. As noted above, planners recommending a cantonment option for (parts of) the DDR process should base their recommendation on a thorough cost-benefits analysis. The paragraphs below critically discuss some possible benefits of cantonment.

13. The main allure of cantonment in DDR processes may in fact be of political/public relations nature. Cantonment provides a number of benefits in terms of appearances. It provides a visual, easily mediatized hint at the conflict coming to an end, a media-friendly perception of armed groups under control, to counter the fear of combatants “out there”, lurking around every corner, typical for times of conflict. This narrative can increase confidence in the peace process and add to its momentum, giving the government a political boost. It can also give armed groups an easy PR success, demonstrating their commitment to peace and the peace process.

14. Groups under cantonment offer DDR practitioners a better opportunity to understand – and address – command and control structures. On one hand, intuitively, cantonment helps maintain unit structures and command and control structures which works well for a planned integration exercise. In fact, new uniformed structures can be built under common barracking of different units – which makes cantonment a tool of choice for creating mixed units (such as it was proposed for the Special Mixed Security Units – USMS – in CAR). The expectation is that through common daily routines “esprit de corps” can be formed laying the ground for trust within new units. However, in the context of CAR, due to prevailing ethnic, political and religious divides, the USMS experiment is yet to yield tangible results due to the absence of a cohesive and efficient command and control structure.

15. But, perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, cantonment also offers a comparative advantage in dismantling unit structures and loyalties. This is because, in

Box 4. DRC

In January 2016, the Reinsertion and Reintegration Project (*Projet de Réinsertion et Réintégration*, PRR) became effective in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By March 2016, UNOPS (financed by MONUSCO) had completed the rehabilitation of two transit centers (*Centres de préparation à la réintégration*, CPR) in Kamina and Kitona, in the south and west of DRC. These were reception sites for the ex-combatants as they began the process returning to civilian life. The first wave of ex-combatants left the two CPRs in July-August 2016 returning to the east of the country.

The CPRs were located far from armed group locations and areas affected by armed group mobilization efforts. The rationale was to take the combatants away from the conflict context in eastern DRC. However, being thousands of kilometers removed led the CPRs to rely on **expensive (air) transport**, financed by the Government and MONUSCO, at point of departure and return of the beneficiaries. Further, the CPRs had **extremely poor living conditions** and due to the proximity between the CPRs and adjacent military camps, some residents were vulnerable to degrading treatment, human rights abuse and recruitment into militia or the DRC military itself. Eventually, MONUSCO withdrew from supporting the CPRs and the stream of the DDR Programme (National DDR Programme III), of which they were part.

As part of the Disarmament, Demobilization Resettlement, Reinsertion and Reintegration (DDRRR), the cantonment of foreign ex-combatants was implemented together with traditional vetting procedures and follow-on repatriation. Six camps were established in the environs of Sake for addressing this caseload of over 30’000 foreign ex-combatants over the course of 30 years (covering MONUC and MONUSCO). FDLR ex-combatants, for example, were processed using a system of DDR/RR transit camps.

cantonment, armed groups can be easily observed and both formal and informal loyalties can be identified and, if sufficient time is accorded, ultimately broken. However, it is always safer to assume that cantonment is an environment more conducive to solidifying command and controls structures under peer pressure than to breaking them. Very specifically to the CAR environment, with various dynamics between armed groups, it is an important planning factor to avoid the risk of building potential camaraderie between separate armed groups or factions of a single armed group under cantonment which would, in consequence, enhance fighting powers of that group as opposed to the DDR objective of dismantling those.

16. In contexts where DDR is supporting breakaway factions of armed groups or defecting (disengaging) fighters, or in areas where there is a number of spoilers actively acting to torpedo the peace process, cantonment provides a safe haven for those willing to voluntarily lay down their weapons and become civilians providing some protection against the pressure of those wanting to target them as a revenge or dissuasion tools for other elements from potentially joining DDR. This is a very particular case of DDR and from the planning perspective it needs to be accompanied by a strong commitment to ensure full protection. This type of approach also has an impact on the duration of an ex-combatant stay under cantonment as a release to a community may not be safe for a long period of time (cf. Box x Somalia).

17. In many cases, the main argument for cantonment is operational and organizational convenience, especially in terms of being able to maximize the efficiency and impact of provided services. Cantonment sites open opportunities in terms of educational and skill-building activities, provided they are adequately equipped (cf. Box 3. on South Sudan). Psycho-social and health counselling activities can also be provided in cantonment sites. This, however, again, requires time, continuous donor support and subsequent sustained investment in the maintenance of the sites and services within them, increasing the cost of the operations.

Principles

- **Cantonment can be recommended for instances where command and control structures should be preserved (such as in transitional security arrangements and/or *en bloc*³ integration into the military); while it also offers some opportunities in situations where these structures are expected to be broken, this may need a significant time investment; when putting different factions under cantonment, attention must be paid that new or stronger command and control structures are not built.**
- **Cantonment (understood somewhat like protective custody) can also be recommended when groups of combatants engaging in DDR need to be protected against external threats; attention needs to be paid that this halfway house approach does not devolve into United Nations-supported detention centers.**

³ When entire units of armed groups are integrated into the national armed forces, retaining their own command and control structures and often their geographical deployment.

Planning considerations discounting a cantonment option

18. Other than the potential risks related to security and lack of sustained funding, the main drawback of the cantonment is the negative perception of cantonment sites by armed groups. While some may see opportunities in cantonment, such as a clear statement of commitment to the armed groups, most associate cantonment with a lost conflict. This is perhaps why cantonment sites worked best in situation where one side decisively won the conflict and the losing side had no other choice than to demobilize under the control of the winning side. In other cases, cantonment attracts opposition, arguments of the lack of proportionality of treatment and fear (e.g. of being targeted, stigmatized or imprisoned by government forces). If sufficient benefits are offered, some combatants may accept to be cantoned, but the majority will stay out. This is one of the issues currently dogging cantonment in South Sudan.

19. Rejection by surrounding communities is also an issue. Armed groups are mostly composed of young males, used to fighting and enjoying the fear that their status as members of an armed group may stir in others. Armed groups have caused harm in local communities during the conflict. Therefore, the vicinity of a cantonment site is usually met with fear. Rumors of real or fake acts by combatants in the cantonment sites spread easily, leading to potential threats or active action of local communities against the sites (riots). This particular risk can be somewhat mitigated by thorough sensitization, continuous communication, transparency and the funding of community projects that are mutually beneficial to host communities and ex-combatants transitioning into civilian life. Information-sharing and problem-solving committees comprising of cantonment community and community at large are useful in this sense, perhaps paving the way for local reconciliation and justice.

Box 5. Burundi

In 2002, the transitional government of Burundi signed ceasefire agreements with several armed groups. In 2003, the government decided to start a cantonment process, although no final peace agreement and no plan for the further DDR process were in place. This led to significant problems, including in the provision of basic services, since individuals stayed in the cantonment site for an extended period of time without a plan for reintegration. There also were instances of military attacks against centers where armed groups were under cantonment.

20. There are inherent threats posed by cantonment sites with prolonged occupancy, which is usually the case when other parts of DDR such as civilian reintegration or security sector integration are delayed, which is rather common. Improperly managed cantonment sites can easily become centers of illegal activity by armed groups starting with criminal acts to trade in weapons and ammunition. In the longer term, cantonment sites risk becoming incubators of poverty and criminality both because there is a limited outflow of the beneficiaries but also because they attract settlement in their vicinity whether by former beneficiaries, families and dependents or traders of various legal or illegal crafts wishing to exchange with the beneficiaries under cantonment. Managing such a population is unsustainable and the risk of falling into poverty and disillusionment increases. A specific case was Nepal where the benefits under cantonment surpassed any expectation for post-cantonment life leading to the beneficiaries not willing to leave (cf. Box 2.).

21. Cantonment means for the United Nations a long-term commitment. However, the commitment of the parties whether the political will of governments or commitment to the peace agreement by the

parties is not a given, it can waver or disappear. The responsibility for caseloads in the cantonment sites does not disappear because the peace process has faltered and can turn into a serious liability (cf. Box 4. on DRC where the abrupt ending of support by the mission to the DDR programme was linked to a significant deterioration of living conditions in two cantonment sites and consequently to a serious blow to MONUSCO's reputation).

22. Finally, under the current epidemiological situation, the rationale of putting together a potentially large group of people in confined spaces (whether beneficiaries, guards or programme officers) needs to be very thoroughly considered, including in light of any recommendations by WHO. A potential outbreak of COVID-19 in a cantonment center needs to be taken into account and adequate preparations and facilities for isolation/hospitalization need to be provided.

Principles

- **Cantonment needs to be preceded by a thorough sensitization campaign both for the communities and for the armed groups.**
- **During the COVID-19 pandemic, gathering armed elements in cantonment sites must be preceded by a health impact analysis, impacting such elements as the size and spacing of accommodation, adequate sanitary infrastructure and procedures etc.**

Box 6 Colombia

In Colombia, the cantonment was done in a number of different sites (not called cantonment sites, a local nomenclature was used). Their locations were jointly decided by FARC and the UN, the national police and military guarded the perimeter. Inside cantonment sites, some FARC members who were allowed to keep their weapons (i.e. to be disarmed as last) provided security. The disarmament (again, in the Colombian process referred to by a locally preferred term) was done in locations separate from the cantonment. After some initial hesitation, the UN alone was entrusted with verifying the process.

Colombians invested significant resources in their DDR programme, and the cantonment was well planned and organized. However, even with this significant investment, issues occurred. These issues were delays with the construction of accommodation or food delivery, which initially jeopardized the trust between the Government and the beneficiaries. Neither the risk nor security assessment were conducted. In some instances, lethal attacks against demobilized individuals occurred. Location of some sites was inconvenient with accessibility only by air for a large part of the year – which was ensured but increased the cost.

Gender and cantonment process

23. If not properly planned, cantonment can be especially challenging for women. Most often the needs of women, predominantly those relating to hygiene and personal safety, are not anticipated, or addressed in cantonment centers. Women and girls sometimes leave cantonment sites after only a few days because of unsafe housing arrangements and inadequate provisioning of hygiene and healthcare supplies, particularly female hygiene items. One study on an interim care center for child combatants in Sierra Leone reported that 45 percent of them “did not receive proper sanitation materials, including soap,

shampoo, and feminine hygiene products.” A study of female ex-combatants revealed that several women and girls left cantonment sites after being deemed eligible for DDR due to housing arrangements that made them feel unsafe because of the presence of too many men combined with too little protection.

24. A number of measures needs to be taken to properly consider women’s specific needs at cantonment sites. As per the IDDRS 5.10 on Gender and DDR, separate facilities have to be provided for female and male combatants. Sanitary facilities need to be designed in a way that allows for privacy, in accordance with culturally accepted norms, and water and sanitation should be available to meet women’s and girls’ hygiene needs. This is particularly important as some women associated with armed groups may have been abducted and/or may have suffered sexual violence, and, if their protection is not properly planned, in cantonment centers, they would continue to live alongside their rapists and other men who exploited them.

25. Women’s specific health needs should be planned for and included as essential items in any health care packages. When planning the transportation of people associated with armed groups and forces to cantonment sites or to their communities, sufficient resources should be budgeted for to offer women and girls the option of being transported separately from men and boys, if their personal safety is a concern. Personnel at the cantonment sites should include female DDR experts, female translators and female field staff for reception centres and cantonment sites to which women associated with armed forces and groups can safely report. It is also important to make space available for families that do not wish to be separated. In addition, efforts have to be made to offer women in cantonment sites equal access to briefings, trainings and other facilities at the site. To make it possible for women to take advantage of these training and education opportunities offered in the cantonment sites, child-care also has to be provided. In order to safeguard against sexual violence, latrines, ablution areas, and washing and kitchen facilities should be placed in open areas and should be well lit at night. Cooking facilities, fuel and water should be provided so that women and girls do not need to leave the cantonment area. Health care services, which include reproductive and psychosocial health services, are essential. Women and girls may have specific health and psychosocial needs, e.g., relating to maternity or gender-based violence. Cantonment sites should provide birthing kits, sufficient clean water, supplemental feeding, and medical facilities. Such measures are essential to allow female ex-combatants in to participate in training and receive any health care or counselling services required.

Principle:

- **Cantonment can be especially challenging for women. Therefore, if cantonment is selected as the preferred option for disarmament and demobilization, then a number of measures have to be planned for and funded to properly cater for women’s specific needs in cantonment sites.**

Annex

The advantages and disadvantages of cantonment as per the Integrated DDR Standards module 4.20 on Demobilization

Advantages

- Can be used when large numbers of combatants and persons associated with armed forces and groups are being demobilized.
- Easier to carry out demobilization activities (registration, profiling, screening, health screening, information sharing, etc.) when members of armed forces and groups are concentrated in one location.
- Administrative and logistical needs can be pre-planned, and material can be stockpiled.
- Provides armed forces and groups with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process.
- Can help mark the transition from military to civilian life, and help those who are demobilizing to adjust to their change in status.
- Allows for phased returns of demobilized individuals to their communities, giving communities time to absorb returning ex-combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups.

Disadvantages:

- Costly to construct and maintain.
- Not well suited to armed groups that are community based.
- If entry is not phased and adequately organized, can lead to security incidents.
- Can be perceived by those who are demobilizing as representing a loss of freedom. Becomes a known fixed concentration of potential or previous adversaries.
- Potentially dangerous for female combatants and women associated with armed forces and groups, who will require separate cantonment areas.
- May be approached by active armed groups intent on forcibly retrieving individuals who have left their groups.
- May serve as a target for political discontent.
- May encourage people to present themselves as combatants, even if they have never been a member of an armed force or group.
- May attract local people in search of supplies and food.
- May become permanent if demobilization and/or reintegration are delayed.
- May draw resistance from local communities that object to having cantonment sites located near them.
- May become sites of unrest and criminality if the cantonment process is delayed.