

I. Creating Opportunities for Youth Education and Involvement in the Peacebuilding Process

Creating opportunities for young people to be involved in peacebuilding is imperative for the future of their communities. Germany believes that giving the next generation the tools to create lasting peace and avoid conflict will help post-war areas to heal and become healthy, thriving regions for the future. The best way to do this is by recognizing the skills and experience of these youths and giving them the tools and opportunities to use them for peacebuilding.

According to the Oxford research group, “the youth mobilization and reintegration factors such as who they are, what they did before the conflict, how they were recruited, what specific fighting roles they undertook, what they experienced physically, socio-economically and psychologically, during the armed conflict, and what ‘home’ context they will be reintegrating into will all be critical for the youth’s trajectories in peacebuilding.”¹ In 2012, a guidebook for United Nations mediators was written by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and presented at the German House in New York. It promotes specific measures for male youths to learn non-violent conflict management techniques to prevent young people from turning to violence within the community and in regional conflicts in their future. This guide also outlines providing psychological and medical care for female youth ex-combatants to help with reintegration. In Uganda, Germany has supported the NGO Youth Social Work Association, which supports female ex-combatants reintegrating into society via economic integration and empowerment via social work, income-generating training, and psychosocial care. Reintegration of ex-combatants is the first step in helping them be able to contribute to peacebuilding processes in their community. Germany works with the United Nations, NATO, the OSCE and other organizations to utilize community education in combating sexual violence as a facet of conflict management strategies. By educating youths in post-conflict regions on combating sexual violence, which is so often a remnant of conflict and leads to more violence, the community moves towards peace through non-violent means.²

Moving forward, Germany would like to see more programs that give youths leadership roles in conflict avoidance and peacebuilding both within their communities and in the surrounding region. Young people have so much experience that they should be able to put to good use. By giving first-hand experience to these young leaders, they are better suited for peaceful leadership when they are adults, in their communities and abroad. This body should facilitate the growth of these youths by supporting their Reintegration into the community on a financial, social, and medical scale, providing education opportunities for them to work with other youths and adults on Peacekeeping skills both interpersonal and larger scale, and allowing those interested to get experience in Government and politics to peacefully lead a better tomorrow (R.P.G. project).

¹ “The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities.” *Oxford Research Group*, 16 Sept. 2019, www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/the-role-of-youth-in-peacebuilding-challenges-and-opportunities.

II. Integrating Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Standards into Community-Based Organizations

According to the United Nations website, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration consists of three activities that can be performed before, during and after the mediation process: mediation support, analysis, and capacity building. Mediation support is the “deployment of experts, drafting provision of agreements, and negotiation advice.” Analysis is the “mapping of armed groups and identification of entry points for programmatic engagement.” Capacity building is “strengthening the parties’ ability to work constructively towards an agreement.” Germany believes that getting people and organizations from local communities in post-conflict regions to take part in DDR is the key to successful and long-lasting peace. By matching an organization’s strengths with one of the three DDR activities, they can be efficient and effective in their work.

Germany and the UN execute community “violence reduction” programs that include work from labor projects, business development, and community dialogue forums to interpersonal connection with armed groups members and at-risk youth to prevent recruitment.³ This community violence reduction is imperative to reducing tensions at the grassroots level, which increases opportunities for resolving and avoiding conflict, as well as a sense of social unity. Already, ex-combatants in places like the Central African Republic are working in DDR; these people’s experience can be helpful in both the Analysis and Capacity Building phases. They can also be helpful in reaching out to other ex-combatants and at-risk youth. Small scale acts help engender trust on both sides; one common example is the public bonfires of weapons shows the disarming groups that the other groups are handing over their weapons, deescalating any arms races and encouraging disarmament. One aspect of DDR which is more suited for community organizations is the reintegration of ex-combatants after they have left their armed group. The UN is not suited for this type of small-scale effort, and local organizations should be called upon to work with building trust between these ex-combatants and their community. Often, religious and spiritual groups are powerful re-integrators, helping ex-combatants to find a sense of community and belonging where it may have been difficult to do so due to their history with the armed group they were in. By better understanding the impact a local organization has on its surroundings, Member States can better activate them for purposes best suited to them when the time comes.

Germany would like to see this body work towards utilizing the three DDR activities more when matching community organizations with DDR tasks. One of the biggest challenges of DDR is fostering trust between two combatant groups; having an already trusted local organization begin building a bridge between the two would greatly improve the Mediation Support goal. Being able to find and mobilize such an organization in this scenario should be a focus going forward. Member States dealing with DDR should implement more efficient utilization of established community organizations by matching them and the objective with one of the three DDR actions. This body and the UN at large should support and advice such Member States as they work to make their own unique DDR efforts more efficient and effective.

³ “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Peacekeeping.” *United Nations*, United Nations, peacekeeping.un.org/en/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration.