



## DEMOBILIZATION: INTERNATIONAL CASES

### INTRODUCTION

In February 2015, the Sub-Commission on the End of the Conflict began joint work in Havana. This technical group is comprised of 20 members – 10 selected by the GOC and 10 by the FARC. They are dedicated to defining input for the discussions on this agenda point, which includes disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the FARC. Even though Colombia has experience in collective and individual demobilization, the model to be used with the FARC will not be confirmed until an agreement on this point has been made. This document therefore examines international concepts and models that could serve Colombia in the design and implementation of the demobilization of the FARC.

The Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) define demobilization as:

*“the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion”.*<sup>i</sup>

The first stage of demobilization can be conducted in a centralized model in the camps described above, or in a decentralized model. These are detailed below.

#### CENTRALIZED MODEL:

*Fixed cantons where demobilized people remain for a defined period while receiving benefits*

#### COLOMBIA (2003-2006)

**Number of demobilized people from the AUC:** 31,671

**Logistics:** The transfer of combatants was agreed with the commanders from each bloc; the camps were located in places that were controlled by the AUC and were made suitable for the installation of the assistance circuit, in which a range of entities had a role in demobilization.

**Services:** Government IDs, judicial benefits requests, identification (DNA, dental records, etc.), special testimony, judicial record, carnet, basic personal kit, civilian clothes, and cash payment upon exit.

**Duration:** Phased over three years and 38 demobilizations. Each one lasted 1-2 weeks depending on the number of people in each bloc.

**Lessons learned:** 1) The definition of “combatant” was not clear, which resulted in an increase in the number of

demobilized people (support networks, family members, and others arrived to demobilize). 2) There was a lack of coordination with local authorities, as their capacity to receive ex-combatants and support the process was unknown, and the authorities were not well informed about how the demobilization was going to impact their region. 3) There was no differential focus for people with disabilities, children and adolescents, and women, so the services did not address their needs in this initial phase of their entry to civilian life. 4) The combatants did not receive sufficient information about reintegration and there was no traceability from the moment of demobilization and the final destination, so many were lost and never arrived at the reintegration route, and others modified their responses to the institutional questionnaires, thereby invalidating the information they had given during the demobilizations. 5) The cash payment in the demobilizations generated internal conflicts and outbreaks of violence.<sup>ii</sup>

#### GUATEMALA (1997)

**Lessons learned:** 1) Agreements between the government and the guerrilla facilitated the

**Number of demobilized people from the URNG:** 2,928

**Logistics:** The cantons were established in neutral sites, and had semi-permanent facilities such as warehouses, command points, dormitories (for participants and families), recreation areas, libraries, kindergartens, bathrooms, and dining rooms, among others.

**Services:** Government IDs, basic personal kit, medical evaluation, education, job training. They were always occupied and there was a lot of emphasis on extensive training and education processes.

**Duration:** 60 days.

implementation of demobilization because they defined the terms and conditions for demobilization and other important topics. 2) There were few security problems because a bilateral ceasefire had been agreed 9 months before demobilization started, thereby generating stable conditions. 3) The cantons were located in neutral sites and there was political will on all sides, facilitating commitment to the demobilization process. 4) The materials of the cantons were donated to the communities after their dismantling, generating positive impact in the zones affected by the conflict. 5) There was direct participation by the guerrilla in decision-making, which also contributed to their commitment to the process.<sup>iii</sup>

### DECENTRALIZED MODEL:

*Services are taken to populated centers and urban areas under guerrilla influence*

#### AFGHANISTAN (2003-2005)

**No. of demobilized people from the military:** 63,000

**Logistics:** Regional teams identified demobilized people before benefits began, and mobile teams went to the communities and took charge of service provision.

**Services:** Medical evaluation, government ID, food until the beginning of reintegration 3 weeks later, information about reintegration. The cycles of services were conducted by armed group unit. Children and adolescents demobilized in the communities with support from UNICEF and local NGOs.

**Duration:** After the hand-over of the lists of demobilized people, mobile teams went to the communities where the ex-combatants voluntarily relocated, and services were provided in one day. One month after having conducted this process, they could enter a reintegration program. A few months could pass between the day when identification of ex-combatants was conducted and the day on which services were provided.

**Lessons learned:** 1) Registration of ex-combatants was efficient, and it was possible to design effective logistical processes because information collection in the initial stages was comprehensive. 2) The inclusion of DDR in the Bonn Agreement would have strengthened political commitment to the process. 3) Regional security was very weak and unstable, which made regional implementation difficult.<sup>iv</sup>

#### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (2003-2005)

**No. of demobilized from various groups:** 102,000

**Logistics:** The "Orientation and Transit Centers (OTC)" were created in communities where the combatants demobilized or near the camps where they had lived. The OTC were fixed and were later used as reintegration service centers in the medium and long term.

**Services:** Registration, medical and psychosocial evaluation, an initial cash payment, information about reinsertion and reintegration. Children and adolescents were sent to UN "Transit Centers".

**Duration:** Five days.

**Lessons learned:** 1) Combatants were only eligible if they had a weapon, so there were increases in arms sales and trafficking. However, some of those who did not fulfil these criteria were able to access certain reintegration services in the communities. 2) OTC capacity was limited so demobilization lasted longer than expected. 3) Payments did not always reach the demobilized people (they were conducted through a cellphone payment

system) due to the weak banking system, causing a decrease in trust. 4) The program adapted to the regions, aiming to fulfill local needs, but presenting difficulties in coordination between entities at the national and regional levels.

### CONCLUSION

Various advantages and disadvantages of the two types of model can be identified in the lessons learned.

#### **Advantages of the centralized model (canton):**

- 1) Security is controlled more easily and counting and registration can be conducted more efficiently.
- 2) This is the symbolic starting point for the transition to civilian life, allowing demobilized people to receive services in an organized and controlled way.
- 3) Ex-combatants can play a role in the internal organization of the camps and the distribution of tasks.

#### **Disadvantages of the centralized model (canton):**

- 1) It is more costly.
- 2) Internal outbreaks of violence can present themselves, and as it is an easily identifiable location, it can be attacked by illegal organizations who wish to sabotage the process.
- 3) There is more risk of stigmatization of demobilized people because they are more visible.
- 4) The cantons can have short and medium term effects in the communities as they imply dramatic changes that affect social and economic life.

#### **Advantages of the decentralized model (no canton):**

- 1) It is more cost-efficient and flexible.
- 2) It is less coercive.
- 3) It can focus on specific groups – it allows community participation and interaction with ex-combatants.

#### **Disadvantages of the decentralized model (no canton):**

- 1) It does not always offer all services.
- 2) The psychological effects of the transition to civilian life are not as evident and the population can disperse, making the reintegration process more difficult.
- 3) As it is a voluntary process, it can result in a lack of ex-combatants presenting themselves to participate.

<sup>i</sup> Integrated DDR Standards – Terms and Definitions.

<http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/IDDRS%201.20%20Glossary.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Información interna OIM, Informe Final: Procesos de desmovilización con las Autodefensas (OACP). <http://www.acnur.org/t3/uploads/pics/2258.pdf?view=1>, "Tierralta, las lecciones aprendidas de una reinsertión a medias" (Verdad Abierta, marzo 2015

<https://www.verdadabierta.com/desmovilizados/5681-tierralta-las-lecciones-aprendidas-de-una-reinsertion-a-medias>) and "Un Grito de Esperanza" (Presidencia de la Republica y OACP, abril 2007)

<sup>iii</sup> "Guatemala Demobilization And Incorporation Program" USAID, January 1999.

[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pdabr112.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdabr112.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> "Missed Opportunities: The Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan" United States Institute of Peace, April 2011. [http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR270-Missed\\_Opportunities.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR270-Missed_Opportunities.pdf)