



## ADDRESSING THE INTRICACIES OF REINTEGRATION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED SOCIETIES: THE ROLE OF UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION

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### Abstract:

This paper examines the role of United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Missions in facilitating reintegration in societies affected by conflict. The research focuses on understanding the complexities and challenges involved in reintegration processes and evaluates the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping interventions in these contexts. Conflict-affected regions where UN Peacekeeping Missions have been active are selected as case studies. The findings reveal a nuanced picture. While UN Peacekeeping Missions have had significant successes in some areas, such as disarmament and the initial resettlement of displaced persons, challenges persist in long-term societal integration, economic inclusion, and political stability. The study identifies factors contributing to these mixed outcomes, including the extent of local engagement, resource allocation, and the geopolitical context. The implications of this research are twofold. First, it provides insights into improving current UN strategies for reintegration. Second, it suggests areas for further research, particularly in developing more effective models for long-term economic and political integration in post-conflict societies.

**Keywords:** Reintegration, Conflict-Affected Societies, UN Peacekeeping Missions, Post-Conflict Recovery.

### Introduction:

A region's peace and normality journey begins with conflict cessation. Reintegrating war-torn civilizations is crucial to this path. Reintegration in post-conflict nations entails reintegrating displaced people, ex-combatants, and impacted communities into their social, economic, and political systems. This approach is essential for immediate peace and long-term stability and growth. Reintegration in post-conflict countries is crucial. Violence prevention, reconciliation, and community resilience depend on effective reintegration programmes. Reintegration also helps peacebuilding achieve governance, rule of law, and sustainable development. Reintegration is one of the hardest parts of post-conflict healing, despite its importance. The varying demands of returnees, the complicated socio-political dynamics of conflict-affected communities, and limited resources make such initiatives challenging. Balancing short-term goals like ex-combatant disarmament and demobilisation with long-term goals like social cohesion and economic integration complicates these issues. Reintegration must also address local cultures, histories, and conflict victims' traumas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Cherney, The Release and Community Supervision of Radicalised Offenders: Issues and Challenges that Can Influence Reintegration, 33 *Terrorism and Political Violence* 119–137 (2021).



This article examines how UN Peacekeeping Missions handle these issues. UN Peacekeeping Missions have led international efforts to calm war zones and promote peace. They mediate, facilitate, and occasionally administer reintegration programmes, assisting them. These missions' ability to promote sustainable reintegration is still debated.

### **The Phase of Reintegration**

**Relevance:** For post-conflict communities to remain stable and advance in the long run, reintegration is essential. Its goal is to assist ex-combatants in reintegrating into society and leading fulfilling lives.

**Effectiveness:** Educational options, vocational training, jobs, and psychological and social support are essential for a person's successful reintegration into society. The efficiency of these services can be enhanced by tailoring them to individual requirements.

**Shortcomings:** Resolving prejudice and discrimination against ex-combatants, creating long-term economic prospects, and meeting the specific requirements of marginalised communities are all potential obstacles.<sup>2</sup>

### **Relevance and Difficulty of the Reintegration Stage**

Reintegration is crucial to DDR's long-term success in war-torn societies. Its immediate impact on enduring peace and averting future wars makes it crucial. Successful reintegration may lead to social stability, economic progress, and communal reconciliation. Several grounds justify reintegration:

- **Social Stability:** Reducing the risk that ex-combatants may revert to violence or re-join rebel organisations, effective reintegration helps to prevent alienating them.
- **Economic Contribution:** The economic development and rehabilitation of post-conflict communities can be boosted by reintegrated people's constructive contributions.
- **Community Reconciliation:** Achieving lasting peace and social cohesiveness requires reintegration to help communities heal and trust one another again.<sup>3</sup>

However, numerous challenges impede the reintegration process:

- **Social Acceptance:** Fear and mistrust greet returning ex-combatants in many communities. Conquering prejudice and promoting acceptance is difficult yet necessary. Community engagement and awareness initiatives are essential during this aspect of reintegration.
- **Economic Integration:** Former soldiers have a major challenge in finding long-term work. Their requirements may not be met by the local economy, and many lack the knowledge and skills for civilian

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<sup>2</sup> Prosecutor v. Sesay, Case No. SCSL-04-15-T, Judgment, Special Court for Sierra Leone (2009)

<sup>3</sup> Kimberly Theidon, Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia, 31 *Hum. Rts. Q.* 1-34 (2009).



jobs. Educational programmes, financial incentives for organisations that recruit former troops, and skill training are possible solutions.<sup>4</sup>

- **Psychological Support:** Conflict trauma is devastating to mental health. Mental health needs must be met for ex-combatants to reintegrate and thrive. This strategy requires mental health services, including therapy, to be accessible.
- **Gender-Specific Challenges:** Women and children ex-combatants have unique challenges. Children may have missed crucial school years, while women may face more humiliation and sexual abuse. Individualized programmes for these needs are needed for successful reintegration.
- **Resource and Policy Gaps:** Reintegration programmes can only be effective with sufficient money and resources. Not only that, but policies need to be put into action in a way that makes programmes meet actual needs.
- **Sustainability of Programs:** One of the biggest obstacles is making sure reintegration programmes last. In order to keep up with the ever-changing demands, reintegration programmes must be constantly monitored, evaluated, and adjusted.

## Case Studies

1. **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** This story reveals ethnically divided communities' reintegration struggles. UN ethnic reconciliation, infrastructure reconstruction, and political reconciliation may help long-term peacebuilding. UNPROFOR and EU peacekeeping deployments sought to reduce ethnic violence and promote multi-ethnic communities. With mixed ethnic reconciliation and political stability, reintegration requires hard political debates and war-ravaged infrastructure rehabilitation.<sup>5</sup>
2. **East Timor (Timor-Leste):** East Timor's nation-building after independence is unique. Reintegration in newly established nations involves understanding the UN's role in stabilising the state, managing displaced people's return and integration, and building government institutions. UNTAET helped East Timor gain independence. A new national identity, government, and integration of varied ethnicities proved challenging. UNTAET's help shows the UN's post-conflict nation-building and social integration ability.
3. **Sierra Leone:** Reintegrating victims of extreme violence and the UN's role in community trust and reconciliation are highlighted by the Sierra Leone civil war, which recruited young soldiers and horrified society. UNAMSIL disarmed and reintegrated fighting soldiers, including youth. The

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Stibbe, Challenges to Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration, *02 International Relations* 1–8 (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Ndulo, M., United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Security and Reconstruction, *44 AKRON L. REV.* 769-808 (2011).



mission addressed the civil war's severe social and psychological effects via community-based rehabilitation and reconciliation. The narrative stresses the need for specialised reintegration for vulnerable groups like young soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

4. **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):** Despite MONUSCO's efforts, violence and political instability make peace and reintegration difficult. DDR initiatives have had mixed results, with some ex-combatants reintegrating but many returning to armed organisations owing to economic and social issues.
5. **Liberia:** UNMIL's comprehensive approach, including significant investment in community-based programs, contributed to successful reintegration and long-term stability. Strong collaboration with local authorities and communities was a key factor in the success of reintegration efforts.
6. **South Sudan:** The active conflict in South Sudan has severely limited the effectiveness of reintegration efforts, with UNMISS facing challenges in providing adequate protection and support. Resource constraints and lack of political will have hampered the implementation of effective reintegration strategies.

### Connection to Research Question

These case examples illuminate core research topics. The three scenarios' different success percentages show that post-conflict reintegration is difficult and multifaceted. Data support the premise that operational procedures, local engagement, and geopolitics impact UN Peacekeeping Missions' reintegration effectiveness:

1. **Operational Strategies:** The DRC-Liberia comparison shows how localised policies affect reintegration success. Liberia's comprehensive and locally involved strategy helped reintegration in the DRC, which struggled with DDR owing to violence and political instability.
2. **Local Engagement:** Reintegration in Liberia was successful, unlike in South Sudan and DRC, highlighting the need of local participation. Reintegration requires local stakeholders and understanding local dynamics, according to the results.<sup>7</sup>
3. **Geopolitical Context:** The current fighting in South Sudan contrasts with the post-conflict situations of the DRC and Liberia, showing how geopolitical factors may affect peacekeeping deployments. South Sudan's instability and volatility make reintegration difficult.

### Interpretation of Findings

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<sup>6</sup> Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl and Nicholas Sambanis, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs 75 (2010)

<sup>7</sup> Lilli Banholzer and Roos Haer, Attaching and detaching: the successful reintegration of child soldiers, 6 *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 111–127 (2014).



The case studies illuminate UN Peacekeeping Missions' responsibilities and obstacles in reintegrating conflict-affected countries. These findings complement peacekeeping and post-conflict healing research.

**1. Context-Specific Strategies:** Previous study on peacekeeping's context-specific solutions is supported by the findings. Compared to the DRC and South Sudan, Liberian reintegration methods function better in distinct political, cultural, and socioeconomic situations. This implies a more comprehensive understanding of local dynamics and a flexible peacekeeping approach.<sup>8</sup>

**2. Local Engagement and Ownership:** The findings corroborate peacekeeping literature's growing focus on local ownership and engagement. Liberia succeeded with local government and community cooperation. The DRC's modest successes and South Sudan's ongoing issues demonstrate how peacekeeping missions struggle with limited or war-related local engagement.

**3. Long-term Sustainability of Peacekeeping Efforts:** The results inform peacekeeping mission sustainability discussions. Recently, academics have raised concerns regarding peacekeeping mission departure tactics and legacy in the DRC, where violence persists despite UN presence.<sup>9</sup>

### Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings from the case studies, several policy recommendations can be suggested to improve the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Missions in reintegration processes:

**1. Tailor Strategies to Local Contexts:** Peacekeeping operations should customise reintegration tactics to local cultural, socio-economic, and political variables. To guarantee relevant and successful reintegration programmes, local needs and difficulties should be analysed.

**2. Enhance Local Engagement and Ownership:** Reintegration procedures must be owned by local authorities and communities to increase local involvement. To create and execute reintegration programmes, UN missions should collaborate with local government, civil society, and community leaders.

**3. Focus on Long-term Sustainability:** Reintegration should address post-conflict requirements and sustainability. To maintain peace, reintegration programmes should include long-term development objectives including economic growth, education, and healthcare.

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<sup>8</sup> Alison J. Shinkfield and Joseph Graffam, Community Reintegration of Ex-Prisoners: Type and Degree of Change in Variables Influencing Successful Reintegration, 53 *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 29–42 (2009).

<sup>9</sup> Bill Rolston, Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: the Irish Case in International Perspective, 16 *Social & Legal Studies* 259–80 (2007).



**4. Improve Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of reintegration programs continuously. This will help in identifying best practices, areas for improvement, and ensuring accountability.

**5. Invest in Capacity Building:** Strengthen the capacity of local institutions and communities to manage reintegration processes. This includes training, resource allocation, and providing technical assistance to build resilient systems that can sustain reintegration efforts.

**6. Address Political and Security Challenges:** Addressing underlying political and security issues is essential for successful reintegration. UN missions should work in tandem with diplomatic efforts to create a conducive environment for reintegration, including supporting peace processes and political reconciliation.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

This research paper undertook a detailed examination of the role of UN Peacekeeping Missions in the reintegration of conflict-affected societies. Through the analysis of case studies, this study revealed the intricacies and challenges of reintegration efforts in diverse post-conflict settings. The varying degrees of success in the case studies underscored the necessity for reintegration strategies to be tailored to the unique socio-political and cultural contexts of each conflict-affected area. The research highlighted the significance of local engagement and ownership in the success of reintegration efforts. Liberia's success story, in particular, demonstrated the positive impact of collaborative approaches involving local communities and authorities. The recurring conflicts in regions like the DRC, despite prolonged UN presence, pointed to the challenges in achieving long-term stability and the necessity for ongoing support and adaptive strategies. The study showed that the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Missions in facilitating reintegration is highly variable, influenced by operational strategies, resource allocation, and the broader geopolitical context.

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Linkages with Other Processes DDR and Security Sector Reform, IDDRS, 1-36 (2019), available at: <https://www.unndr.org/uploads/documents/IDDRS> (last visited on 25 Nov 2023)



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