Research and Development on Evidence-Based Programme Design for Reintegration (Phase II)

In a recent Joint Working Strategy, the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration determined that evidence-based programming is a strategic priority area for immediate development because reintegration programming is not as effective as it could or should be.

The challenge is to improve the effectiveness of programming through the better use of evidence in the design of reintegration programmes. It is widely recognized by programme designers and policymakers alike that there is a problematic gap between research findings and their use in programme design processes. This gap undermines the potential contributions of research to programming, and limits the effectiveness of programming in local contexts.

However, UNIDIR has concluded (based on the Security Needs Assessment Protocol (SNAP) Project) that the quality of programme designs is not improved by simply providing more and better research to programme designers. Simply put, knowledge does not apply itself. Therefore, the process of application needs renewed and explicit attention.

In 2011 the IAWG asked UNIDIR—as both the United Nations' own research centre dedicated to peace and security issues, and a standing member of the IAWG— to assist in the development of a tool that can achieve this goal.

The first step in responding to this challenge was to develop a Conceptual Framework outlining how evidence can be used to improve programme design on reintegration. Developed through support from Norway and the IAWG itself, *A Framework Document for Evidence-Based Design on Reintegration Programming* lays out the foundations for identifying evidence, and mobilizing it in the crafting of programme designs to achieve strategic goals.

The Framework itself provides the conceptual foundations needed for an evidence-based approach to be developed for the purposes of reintegration programming. What it cannot do is provide practical guidance in the form of sequences, practices, procedures, or products that can give direct support to field staff navigating complex reintegration contexts.

Therefore, Phase II, currently underway, will turn the Framework into a programme design tool that will help programme designers better achieve their strategic goals in local contexts.

The complex nature of reintegration requires designers to strike a balance between policy goals (i.e. the ideal) and the many kinds of sociocultural, practical, and material features that characterize a given programming context (i.e. the real). Initial research with programme designers and other field staff has indicated that they face the following kinds of challenges with respects to reintegration:

• While policy exists indicating *what* is to be done (in general terms) in reintegration contexts, they must often determine themselves *how* to best achieve those goals.

• While large amounts of information are sometimes available (e.g. through numerous kinds of assessments), it is often difficult to know which kinds of information are most pertinent to the design of local action and the achievement of reintegration goals.

• Though specific field missions may come up with insightful ways of addressing these challenges, as yet there is no way of systematizing how designers work with evidence in the achievement of strategic goals.

A common tool is proposed as a practical and direct way of addressing these and other challenges in order to support field staff in improving the effectiveness of reintegration programming. It will offer sequences or techniques for how to work with evidence, and a basis for evaluating proposed designs on the basis of that evidence.

Phase II of the project will result in a prototype of an Evidence-Based Programme Design Tool.

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Project description