

Towards Effective Demobilization and Reintegration Programs for Recruits and Returnees from the Battlefronts

2014-2024 A case study on Taiz city during

Policy Brief



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YPS Pact, YWBOD, CSSST, and Policy Brief Author

The United Nations Peace Support Facility for Yemen

The United Nations Peace Support Facility for Yemen was established in 2019 to support national and subnational peace process. The facility is managed by UNDP Yemen.

YPS Pact – Yemen

The Youth, Peace and Security Pact is a dynamic and voluntary national youth entity that brings together thirty exceptional young leaders from diverse civil, political, and social backgrounds across Yemen. This entity was established in September 2020 with the gracious invitation and support of the United Nations Population Fund and UN Women. The primary objective of the Pact is to foster youth empowerment and ensure their meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes and decision-making platforms.

YWBOD

Established in April 2013, YWBOD is a non-governmental, non-profit, civil society organization working on youth empowerment, peacebuilding and development in Yemen. YWBOD has the strategic vision to be the pioneer platform for young men and women engaging in peacebuilding programs in Yemen. Since its establishment, YWBOD seeks to empower young changemakers in a peaceful, coherent and inclusive context in Yemen, supporting the effective roles of young people in local and national policies to contribute to development and peace. This has resulted in strong partnerships and collective work towards impactful and sustainable results for the empowerment of young men and women and their engagement in community security, community resilience and conflict resolution, recovery and reconstruction, humanitarian relief and livelihoods.

CSSST Project

The Civil Society Security Support in Taiz project (CSSST) is being implemented by Youth without Borders Organization for Development (YWBOD) in close partnership with civil society organizations and alliances. This collaborative effort is undertaken in coordination and cooperation with government institutions in Taiz city, including the local authority, police administration, military units, and other stakeholders involved in security matters in Taiz. The overarching objective of this project is to enhance the security situation in Taiz and contribute to the establishment of a stable and peaceful environment at the local level. By implementing targeted interventions, the project aims to strengthen the capabilities of security institutions in Taiz city, enabling them to effectively address and overcome security challenges. This, in turn, will play a crucial role in improving overall security within the city.

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Executive Summary

Over the past decade, Taiz, a city in southwestern Yemen, has experienced significant military recruitment efforts. Thousands of young individuals have joined military, security forces, and popular armed groups. However, as the conflict intensity has lessened, the consequences of these recruitment operations have become apparent. Crime rates, specifically extortion, banditry, and trespassing on public and private property, have seen a noticeable increase. Furthermore, the impact reaches beyond just criminal activities and affects various aspects of society, including social, cultural, economic, and political realms. The participation of young people in military formations has led to limited engagement in these areas. Furthermore, the detrimental psychological and health consequences of the war on these recruits have had a negative impact on both society and the state. Rather than being viewed as a positive opportunity for development, these recruits have become an additional burden and threat. As a result, there is now a widespread recognition among both the recruits themselves and society as a whole about the importance of demobilization and reintegration programs. However, despite this recognition, a number of concerns and challenges have emerged that could impede the success of such programs. The policy paper outlines these challenges as a lack of awareness regarding demobilization and reintegration programs, leading to skepticism about their objectives among various stakeholders. Moreover, societal stigma towards young recruits and their perception within society, combined with the limited availability of alternative opportunities if they choose to leave military service, and the absence of guidance and psychological and social support programs, further complicate the situation.

The policy paper sheds light on the intricacy of demobilization and reintegration programs, particularly in the challenging context of the ongoing conflict in Taiz city. It emphasizes the crucial attention that policymakers must give to this issue. The paper puts forth a set of policy solutions aimed at assisting decision-makers in addressing the far-reaching consequences of the extensive and unregulated recruitment of fighters in recent years. These recommendations are specifically directed towards national-level government policymakers. It urges them to prioritize the inclusion of demobilization and reintegration in peace negotiations and ensure that any peace agreement mandates the establishment of a joint national body dedicated to demobilization and reintegration efforts. Furthermore, adopting a gradual approach to tackling this issue and providing attractive and effective demobilization packages for military recruits and returnees are highlighted as essential steps in mitigating the challenges at hand.

Additionally, the policy paper directs its recommendations towards government policymakers at the local level, taking into account the current circumstances of the ongoing conflict. It suggests the establishment of specialized centers dedicated to the rehabilitation and integration of military recruits and individuals returning from the front lines. These centers would provide support for these individuals to continue their education from the point where they had to halt their studies due to military service. Furthermore, the paper highlights the importance of addressing the job scarcity by prioritizing the employment of civilian recruits who possess the necessary qualifications. By implementing these recommendations, local policymakers can contribute to the successful reintegration and empowerment of these individuals amidst the ongoing conflict.





Furthermore, the policy paper underscores the significance of international and local organizations in exerting pressure on the involved parties to prioritize the inclusion of the demobilization and reintegration agenda in peace negotiations. This inclusion is crucial for ensuring sustainable peace and security. Additionally, these organizations can provide valuable support to government authorities at both the national and local levels in implementing effective demobilization and reintegration programs. By establishing a genuine and fruitful partnership, these organizations can actively incorporate the priorities of recruits and individuals returning from the front lines. This entails considering their needs when designing and implementing various projects, as well as facilitating their active participation in training, rehabilitation activities, and relevant programs conducted by these organizations. Through collaborative efforts, these parties can contribute to the successful reintegration and empowerment of these individuals, fostering long-term stability and peace.





In Yemen, since the outbreak of the war in 2014, extensive military recruitment operations have been initiated. These operations have involved the internationally recognized Yemeni government forces and the alliance of Houthi forces and former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Both sides mobilized and formed additional forces to support their official troops. In response, the legitimate government established popular resistance factions¹ in several Yemeni governorates, receiving military and material assistance from Saudi-led coalition. This led to the recruitment of tens of thousands of new fighters who joined these popular armed factions initially. Subsequently, these fighters were integrated and incorporated into official military and security units under the supervision of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. On the other hand, the Houthi-Saleh alliance capitalized on their control over certain areas and bolstered their military capabilities through extensive recruitment campaigns. They established what became known as the “popular committees,”² which actively mobilized and recruited a large number of individuals into their ranks. While some of these recruits were eventually integrated into the official army and security formations, others remained part of the popular armed formations, operating outside the realm of official recognition.

Taiz city witnessed the largest proportion of recruitment operations. Among all the districts in Taiz city, the largest scale of recruitment operations took place, drawing in thousands of fighters. Specifically, districts such as Cairo, Al- Mudhaffar, and Salah, which are the subjects of this study, witnessed significant recruitment activities. These operations remained intense and increased in frequency, particularly during the initial years of the war when battles intensified and fighting fronts expanded. The mobilization and recruitment efforts primarily targeted the youth population. It is worth noting that the recruitment and mobilization of fighters lacked organization and systematic planning, as it largely occurred in a haphazard manner without a structured approach.

The surge in recruitment operations can be attributed to various political, economic, and social circumstances, which will be elaborated upon later. These circumstances left young individuals with limited options, ultimately leading them to resort to joining the fighting forces or becoming military recruits. The consequences of this trend are becoming evident today, as young people exhibit a significant reluctance to pursue education at different levels and participate in political, economic, and social spheres. Furthermore, the uncontrolled recruitment has resulted in a state of security imbalance and chaos. The sheer number of recruits over the past decade has placed an enormous burden on security and military authorities, making it challenging for them to meet their needs and provide adequate training and qualification to enhance discipline. Moreover, this situation has also put a strain on the government budget.

¹ The Popular Resistance refers to locally organized armed groups that have been established by the internationally recognized government with the backing of the Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy. Comprising individuals who voluntarily fight alongside the government forces and receive their support, these groups do not possess official military status or the associated privileges.

² The Popular Committees refer to local armed formations that are aligned with the Houthi group, also known as Ansar Allah. These committees consist of various tribes, clans, and individuals who actively participate in combat alongside the Houthi military forces. However, it is important to note that they do not hold official military status nor enjoy the associated privileges.





In addition to the vast and widespread consequences, it is crucial to recognize this issue as a genuine problem that extends beyond the borders of Taiz city, impacting the entirety of Yemen. It poses a threat to local security and peace, while undermining political, economic, and social aspects of life, leaving a significant absence of young people who have become entangled in military and security forces or local armed groups. To effectively address this problem and mitigate its effects, demobilization and reintegration programs emerge as an ideal international practice. These programs offer a potential solution by demobilizing young military recruits and reintegrating them into society, thereby reinstating their roles and facilitating their participation in various aspects of life. Besides mitigating the threats and risks associated with the unregulated presence of these individuals within the military and armed formations, implementing demobilization and reintegration programs offers the potential to alleviate the burdens faced by military and security authorities, as well as the strain on the state budget in meeting the financial obligations of this substantial number of recruits. However, it is important to acknowledge the unique nature and sensitivity surrounding discussions of demobilization and reintegration programs, particularly within the context of an ongoing conflict that has persisted for over a decade. Therefore, these programs must be meticulously designed, taking into account comprehensive systematic studies and research that provide a clear understanding of the Yemeni context, the dimensions and consequences of the problem, and the sensitivity of the conflict. Without this careful consideration, these programs may not achieve their intended objectives and, instead, could inadvertently fuel the conflict and exacerbate the existing problem.

This policy paper represents an initial endeavor to comprehend the issue of recruits and returnees from the battlefronts in Yemen, focusing specifically on the city of Taiz and its three districts: Sala, Cairo, and Al- Mudhaffar. Its primary objective is to analyze and comprehend the dynamics of recruitment operations, their underlying causes, their effects, and the most effective approach to addressing them. By doing so, this paper aims to provide guidance and support to international and local stakeholders, including military and security authorities, in developing efficient demobilization and reintegration programs. The intention is to derive the maximum value and benefit from these programs while actively resolving the problem at hand, all the while ensuring that they do not inadvertently worsen the situation or create any unintended consequences.

This paper specifically focuses on addressing the demobilization and reintegration of young recruits who have actively participated in the conflict since its onset in 2014. This focus is primarily driven by the fact that they constitute the largest proportion of those recruited, compared to other age groups. Furthermore, their continued involvement in military and armed formations has had significant negative repercussions, as they are often perceived as potential threats rather than valuable assets that can be effectively utilized for the betterment of families, communities, and the state. The primary objective of demobilization and reintegration programs is to transform this potential danger into an opportunity and investment, enabling these young individuals to contribute optimally across various aspects of life at the family, community, and state levels. This paper conducted a comprehensive case study focusing on the city of Taiz, which falls under the jurisdiction of the internationally recognized Yemeni government. The aim of this study is to provide valuable insights and support to local authorities, empowering them to initiate the process of designing and implementing effective demobilization and reintegration programs.





This policy paper adopted mix methods, including desk review, KIIs with 30 male and female respondents and focused focus discussions (FGDs) involving 40 male and female participants. The paper made a deliberate effort to ensure broad and comprehensive representation from various segments of society. This encompassed individuals from civilian and military local authorities, international organizations, civil society organizations, officers and soldiers, researchers, jurists, and activists. Notably, special attention was given to include young men and women as representatives from these different segments in the three districts of Taiz city (Cairo, Al-Muzaffar, and Hall). Tailored questionnaires were developed specifically for military personnel and civilians, taking into consideration the challenges associated with accessing quantitative data on the number of recruits, their ages, and other related information over the past decade. The sensitivity of this data in various contexts has limited its availability and accessibility.



Analysis

3,1 Demobilization and reintegration of recruits and returnees from frontlines

By closely examining the trajectory of recruitment operations in Taiz over the past decade, it becomes evident that the initial mobilization and recruitment efforts that commenced in 2015 were predominantly voluntary in nature. These efforts heavily relied upon the enthusiasm and determination of young individuals who were driven to engage in the conflict, defending their cities and striving for victory in support of the internationally recognized government against the Houthi forces and Saleh. However, as the conflict persisted and battles intensified, nearly all aspects of life, particularly economic activities, came to a grinding halt. The closure of numerous companies, factories, and commercial projects, coupled with the dismissal of thousands of workers, created a dire situation. The cessation of salary payments, deteriorating living conditions, and a scarcity of job opportunities further exacerbated the hardships faced by young people. In such circumstances, military recruitment emerged as an employment opportunity and a vital source of income. It became the sole means through which they could support their families, particularly due to the financial compensation associated with being part of the military forces.

Moreover, in addition to providing economic stability, military recruitment offered a chance for individuals to find their purpose and engage in a specific role and activity. This became even more significant as universities, schools, and all sports and cultural activities came to a standstill. With limited avenues available, military recruitment became the only viable option for young people to channel their energy and contribute meaningfully. These circumstances were further reinforced by mobilization rhetoric from various parties, which played a significant role in attracting many young individuals to join the military forces and armed formations.





In recent years, notable changes have occurred in the city of Taiz, as the state has made efforts to reinstate its institutions, particularly in the areas of education and sports. Additionally, commercial activities have resumed, bringing a sense of normalcy to the city. Alongside these developments, there has been a decline in support for the military forces, and armed conflicts between parties on various fronts have diminished in intensity. As a result, military recruitment operations have significantly decreased. However, the reduction in recruitment has revealed the negative consequences of haphazard and unregulated enlistment. Early signs of violence and security chaos have emerged among some recruited fighters, which, despite the government's attempts to address³, were expected to occur. This serves as a crucial indicator of the potential long-term repercussions faced by tens of thousands of young individuals who have undergone recruitment.

Furthermore, the financial return that these recruits receive in the form of salaries is meager, averaging no more than 40\$. These payments are irregular and unreliable, making it insufficient to support even a small family of two individuals. This predicament is exacerbated by inflation and the significant increase in general prices, particularly in food prices due to currency depreciation. Consequently, these recruits are compelled to seek alternative means to meet their basic needs. Regrettably, this often leads them to resort to illegal and illicit activities, such as extortion, robbery and trespassing on public and private properties. Consequently, they become a constant and escalating threat, posing a danger to society. **Civil society organizations have observed that a majority of the legal violations and armed disturbances in Taiz are perpetrated by these recruits and returnees from the conflict fronts who have not been properly assimilated, integrated, or provided with any comprehensive programs or support.**

On the other hand, a significant number of young recruits and those returning from the conflict fronts have come to the realization that they have sacrificed nearly a decade of their lives in military service, without the opportunity to pursue their education or acquire alternative professions and skills. This is compounded by the physical and psychological toll of battles and combat operations, with fighters enduring lasting harm and psychological effects. The absence of adequate psychological support and rehabilitation programs further exacerbates their feelings of loneliness, isolation from society, and difficulties in relating to and connecting with both society at large and their own families. Additionally, the challenging economic conditions they face create obstacles to marriage and forming families, contributing to psychological and social instability.

Moreover, as the military recruitment period lengthens, the reintegration of these fighters into society becomes increasingly difficult. A significant gap emerges between them and their peers who did not join the military, as the latter have made significant strides in both the job market and their educational pursuits.

³ The Yemeni government directs immediate remedies for the security breakdown in Taiz, Asharq Al-Awsat, December 2020 ,5.

<https://shorturl.at/aj8d9>





Meanwhile, recruits and returnees lag behind in the educational process and lack the necessary skills demanded by the labor market. This poses a formidable challenge to their successful reintegration. During the research process, one recruit stated, “recruitment in military has been the worst decision I’ve made, but I am compelled to continue due to the martyrdom of my father. I am the sole provider for my family, and we have no other source of income.” Many young recruits find themselves facing a difficult dilemma, having to choose between pursuing their education and joining the conflict fronts. Due to the deteriorating economic situation and their role as the breadwinners for their families, they feel obligated to enlist in the military.

The wide-ranging consequences of military recruitment, as acknowledged by some young soldiers themselves during the data collection process, may foster a greater openness and willingness on their part to engage constructively with demobilization and reintegration programs. However, there exist numerous concerns among both these recruits and returnees, as well as society at large, which could hinder the success of such programs. These concerns can be summarized as the following difficulties and challenges faced by demobilization and reintegration initiatives:





3,1,1 Poor awareness and fears of demobilization in the context of war

The level of awareness surrounding demobilization and reintegration programs, including their significance and purpose, remains disconcertingly low. This lack of awareness is not only prevalent among recruits, who may perceive these programs as a form of punishment aimed at removing them from military service, depriving them of privileges such as salaries, and displacing them instead of rewarding them for their dedicated service. Regrettably, this limited understanding extends to military and security leaders, as well as political factions, who may perceive these initiatives as a conspiracy to weaken their forces in favor of the opposing party. This skepticism is particularly prominent given the ongoing context of war, which may result in the failure of any demobilization and reintegration efforts or programs. Moreover, it could lead to accusations and betrayal of those responsible for implementing such initiatives, at least until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached, guaranteeing security and military assurances for all parties involved. These concerns and fears are valid and must be carefully considered by demobilization and reintegration programs. The authorities responsible for these programs should take into account this logical apprehension and work towards building trust and understanding. Additionally, it is crucial to emphasize the national dimension of demobilization programs and explicitly outline their inclusion in the peace agreement. This would pave the way for the subsequent translation of these programs into legislation and regulations that empower local authorities to effectively implement them.

3,1,2 Societal stigma and protection

Young recruits and returnees harbor deep concerns and fears regarding their acceptance and reintegration into society as ordinary individuals. They believe that society has stigmatized them due to their military involvement, leading to a sense of inferiority and marginalization. The prevailing negative perception towards the military contributes to this perception, as they feel society views them as a lesser group. This ingrained societal stigma often translates into limited job opportunities, with many recruits and returnees finding themselves confined to physically demanding roles such as security companies, construction workers, and guards. They feel compelled to accept these jobs solely because they are soldiers, regardless of their own aspirations, dreams, and desires for different types of work. This stigma also extends to their social lives, hindering their natural integration into society and potentially affecting their chances of marriage. One young recruit, during an interview, expressed the belief that their military service has had a detrimental impact on their personal lives, and they fear that this effect will persist even if they choose to participate in demobilization and reintegration programs. Moreover, they harbor concerns about potential retaliation from certain individuals or groups due to their past actions as soldiers, leading them to prefer remaining in the military as a means of protection.

3,1,3 Scarcity of alternative opportunities

One of the most pressing concerns voiced by young recruits and returnees when discussing reintegration is the limited availability of alternative economic opportunities that can match the stability and financial support provided by their military service.





While some opportunities may exist, the question arises as to their sustainability compared to the guaranteed government salaries they receive from the army, even if they are modest. These salaries ensure the basic needs of their families and provide a sense of security, which is particularly crucial considering that many recruits enlisted during the early stages of the war, lacking the opportunity to complete their education. Even those who managed to complete their education often face challenges in finding suitable employment due to a lack of experience and skills. Furthermore, returning to education is not a viable option for many recruits due to financial constraints and the need to support their families. Additionally, the interruption in their education has created an age gap that may hinder their ability to resume their studies. Their certificates and documents may no longer be valid, and their ages may no longer align with the educational levels they left off at. One recruit, sadly, expressed the sacrifice they had to make, stating, “regrettably, I had a dream of pursuing my education and working in the field of law, which I am passionate about. However, I had to abandon my dream in order to provide a livelihood to my family.”

3,1,4 Absence of guidance and psychosocial support programs for young recruits:

One of the major hurdles hindering the successful reintegration of young individuals into society is the lack of comprehensive guidance, training, rehabilitation, and crucially, psychological and social support programs. Many young people do not identify themselves solely as soldiers, but rather possess diverse hobbies and skills they would like to pursue and utilize instead of continuing their military service. However, without proper guidance and assistance to explore alternative options, along with the absence of psychological and social support programs that prepare young recruits for a seamless transition from military to civilian life, these aspirations become significantly challenging to fulfill. This absence of guidance programs and psychological and social support also presents a barrier for those who wish to establish their own lives and start families. The inherent instability, tension, and psychological burdens resulting from the conflict and military involvement have created an environment of psychosocial instability. Consequently, individuals face difficulties in forming relationships and building families. Furthermore, the lack of appropriate support systems poses a threat to society, as the absence of discipline and illegal practices among those returning from the frontlines can destabilize security and overall societal stability.

3,2 Previous efforts and government policies in the file of demobilization and reintegration

Through the desk review of existing literature and the interviews conducted with various local and national stakeholders, it has become evident that demobilization and reintegration programs, despite their critical importance, have been overlooked and not given the priority they deserve. This lack of attention has resulted in limited efforts and initiatives, with few parties focusing on specific components of these programs. One notable example is “Accept Organization,” which offers support and rehabilitation to imprisoned soldiers within central prisons. Through this initiative, they provide training in various trades and professions, aiming to offer alternative sources of income for these individuals beyond their military service. These training programs are accompanied by essential psychological support sessions, helping participants address the mental health issues stemming from their experiences in war and preparing them for successful reintegration into society.⁴

⁴ Accept Organization, Yemen, May 26, 2024. <https://accept-int.org/en/activity/yemen/>.





Yemen's previous experience with demobilization after the 1994 war was primarily driven by political motives rather than a well-structured and systematic approach to organize the army and security forces. As a result, a large number of recruits were demobilized solely by one party, without a clear strategy or any involvement in rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Moreover, their rights and entitlements were not adequately addressed, leading to widespread injustice among a significant portion of the population. The consequences of this mishandled demobilization continue to burden Yemen to this day, placing a heavy strain on the state's resources and leaving unresolved grievances. This past experience creates a deep-seated fear among various parties and poses a significant challenge and obstacle to future demobilization and reintegration processes and programs. Parties involved may doubt the true intentions behind these initiatives and seek assurances that the mistakes made after the 1994 war will not be repeated. They will demand guarantees that demobilization and reintegration programs will not be exploited as a means of seeking revenge or stripping them of their forces.

After conducting a thorough analysis of official documents and engaging in interviews with military and security leaders, it is evident that there is a lack of official government policies concerning demobilization and reintegration. This issue remains relatively new and unfamiliar to most respondents within the military and security corps. Many of them hold the belief that it is premature to discuss demobilization and reintegration while the war persists and active fronts and military sites continue to exist.

3.3 Nepal's experience in demobilization and reintegration

The case of Nepal stands as a prominent example in the realm of demobilization and reintegration of military recruits. Following a decade-long civil war from 1996 to 2006, marked by widespread violence, violations, and crimes across the country, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement ushered in a new phase, signaling an end to the conflict. This agreement outlined provisions for the management of weapons and armed personnel, including the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants. The United Nations played a crucial role in supporting the implementation of these measures, overseeing the disarmament process and providing assistance for reintegration programs to help combatants transition back into civilian life.

The demobilization and reintegration process in Nepal unfolded through several stages. It commenced with the verification and registration of fighters slated for demobilization and reintegration, compiling comprehensive databases that encompassed personal information, military service history, and the weaponry possessed by each individual. Subsequently, fighters were assembled in various locations for disarmament under the supervision of the United Nations mission. They were then directed to rehabilitation and integration centers, where the Nepalese government, along with several international organizations and agencies, offered a range of programs to support their reintegration efforts. These programs included financial aid to address immediate needs, vocational training initiatives aimed at equipping former combatants with marketable skills and crafts to secure alternative sources of income.



Additionally, educational opportunities in the form of scholarships were provided for those interested in pursuing further studies. Psychological and social support programs, as well as counseling services, were also implemented to address the psychological effects and traumas resulting from the conflict. Furthermore, health services, housing assistance, and resettlement support were offered to those in need. In addition to individual reintegration programs, community-focused initiatives were implemented to foster social cohesion and promote the acceptance of former combatants by society at large. These efforts encompassed community dialogue programs, awareness-raising campaigns, and initiatives aimed at promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence within communities. Overall, these measures contributed to addressing the concerns and needs of combatants, gave them the opportunity to have a better future outside of armed conflict, and successfully reintegrate into civilian life.

The packages offered by demobilization and reintegration programs typically include economic, social, and psychological support, as well as rehabilitation initiatives. However, the key differentiator lies in how these programs are tailored to address the specific context, employing strategies and mechanisms that ensure their effectiveness in achieving successful demobilization and reintegration outcomes. This is particularly important in overcoming the political and military concerns of involved parties, who may view these programs as a potential threat to their existence and strength. Hence, the design of demobilization and reintegration programs necessitates a profound understanding of the national context. This understanding helps in providing effective guarantees that address the concerns and questions of various parties, while offering clear visions and objectives of the demobilization and reintegration programs. One crucial aspect is the establishment of legal and legislative frameworks to provide the necessary cover and legitimacy for these programs. An example of this can be seen in Nepal's experience, where the peace agreement included specific provisions related to demobilization and reintegration.





Solutions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this policy paper, it is evident that there is a clear need for demobilization and reintegration programs, which are generally accepted by various segments of society. However, it is crucial to address the concerns raised by these segments to ensure the success of these programs in achieving their desired goals. One of the primary concerns is the need to establish a well-defined time frame for the implementation of these programs. To effectively address the challenges, demobilization and reintegration programs should be designed to encompass two distinct phases. The first phase should focus on addressing the needs of those affected by the ongoing conflict, including the wounded, disabled, and voluntarily demobilized individuals. Rehabilitation efforts should be prioritized, accompanied by comprehensive psychological, economic, and social support programs to facilitate their reintegration into society. Additionally, advocating for the inclusion of demobilization within the framework of peace negotiations is crucial, as it serves as a vital guarantee for achieving long-term stability and societal peace. The second phase of these programs should be initiated in the post-war context, following the attainment of a peace agreement. This phase will encompass broader demobilization and reintegration processes that involve all parties involved, specifically targeting active forces such as soldiers within military and security agencies. It is vital to demobilize and reintegrate these forces in a systematic manner to achieve the overarching goals of demobilization and reintegration programs. By doing so, the programs can effectively restore the roles of youth in society, enhance community security, and foster lasting peace.

In light of these considerations, this policy paper recommends the following measures:

To Government:

1. Formation of a joint national body for demobilization and reintegration affairs:

The paper strongly recommends the inclusion of demobilization and reintegration as a crucial component in the peace agreement. Specifically, it suggests the explicit and clear stipulation of the formation of a joint national body dedicated to demobilization and reintegration affairs. This body should comprise representatives from key ministries, including the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Training, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Civil Service. Furthermore, it is essential to establish branches of this national body at the local level, involving representatives from the same ministries in local communities. The paper emphasizes the importance of including this body as a specific item within the peace agreement itself. This ensures that the body is officially recognized and empowered to carry out the following tasks:

- a. Develop a holistic national strategy for demobilization and reintegration that adopts a comprehensive approach. This strategy should encompass the design of programs that effectively address the diverse needs of military recruits, taking into account their social, economic, political, and psychological dimensions. It is crucial for the Authority to oversee and closely monitor the implementation of this strategy, ensuring its successful execution within a timeframe of no more than 5 years from its establishment





b. It is imperative to enact the essential laws and legislation that tackle the legal hurdles confronted by military recruits upon their discharge. These measures should actively facilitate their seamless integration into society, ensuring their access to education, public employment, and other rights that may have been impeded due to their prolonged presence in camps and battlefronts.

c. It is crucial to mobilize support and secure funding for the effective implementation of the national strategy. This can be achieved through collaborative efforts and partnerships with national and international stakeholders, including civil society organizations. These partnerships should involve their active participation in the supervision, financing, implementation, and evaluation of demobilization and reintegration programs.

2. Adopt the gradual approach in implementing demobilization and reintegration programs:

The paper highlights the importance of taking a comprehensive approach when designing demobilization and reintegration programs. However, it also recommends adopting a gradual approach during the implementation phase, considering the sensitivity of this issue and the different concerns among various stakeholders. Drawing from Yemen's previous experience with demobilization in 1994, it is crucial to learn valuable lessons and avoid potential resistance or rejection from recruits or military leadership who may perceive these programs as a direct threat or form of punishment. Therefore, the gradual approach should include the following elements:

a. Chronological gradual approach

This can be achieved through a strategic division of demobilization and reintegration programs into two distinct phases. The first phase, which is applicable in the current context of ongoing conflict and the absence of a peace agreement, should primarily focus on the reintegration of military recruits from inactive forces, particularly those who have been wounded or disabled. During this phase, it is crucial to invest in their psychological, economic, and social rehabilitation, as it serves as a top priority and a key determinant of the success of demobilization and reintegration programs. By prioritizing their needs and facilitating their smooth transition back into society, we can generate confidence in these programs, increase society's preparedness, and encourage voluntary participation from young recruits. The second phase, which will be implemented subsequent to the attainment of a peace agreement, aims to demobilize and reintegrate the active force of military recruits.

b. Objective gradual approach

The objective gradual approach underscores the importance of implementing demobilization programs in a step-by-step manner to address potential resistance from recruits or military leaders who may perceive their forces as being targeted. To mitigate such concerns, it is crucial to offer a range of options and alternatives within the demobilization process. These options include, but are not limited to, comprehensive demobilization and partial demobilization. The former option entails providing recruits with a specific monetary sum to initiate a specialized project in exchange for their discharge from the military unit. Alongside financial support, they would also have access to the complete range of benefits offered by the demobilization and reintegration package.



The latter involves temporarily releasing recruits from their military units to participate in rehabilitation and training activities provided by demobilization and reintegration programs. This temporary release provides an opportunity for recruits to explore alternative options without jeopardizing their military careers. By engaging in these activities, recruits can make informed decisions in the future.

3. Provide attractive and effective demobilization and reintegration packages that coincide with comprehensive awareness programs:

In order to incentivize recruits to transition out of their permanent military positions, demobilization and reintegration programs need to offer comprehensive packages of programs and support that are attractive and persuasive. These packages should include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. Recruits who successfully engage in rehabilitation and reintegration programs should be given the opportunity to be reallocated to civil jobs. This involves urging private sector companies to provide job opportunities specifically for recruits who have undergone the demobilization and reintegration process.

b. Providing opportunities for recruits to complete their studies or pursue postgraduate studies for those who are interested. It is important to prioritize recruits in schools, universities, technical and vocational institutes, and provide them with grants or small and soft loans to support them in starting their own projects.

To ensure the success of these programs, it is crucial to implement comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns. These campaigns should effectively convey the correct information to various segments of society, including the recruits themselves. By doing so, we can prevent the spread of false messages and rumors, avoid politicization and incitement, and ensure that the programs receive the necessary support. Additionally, it is essential to address and overcome any societal stigma that recruits may face simply because of their military background or involvement with certain parties or events. This can be achieved by enhancing society's receptiveness through the active involvement of social institutions such as the family, schools, universities, mosques, and the media in the process of socializing and integrating recruits into civilian life.

To Local Authorities in Taiz:

4. Establishment of a rehabilitation and integration center for returnees from the fronts:

The paper proposes the establishment of a dedicated center in partnership with local authorities and civil society organizations in Taiz. This center would serve as a safe haven for individuals returning from the front lines, with a particular focus on those who have voluntarily demobilized, as well as the wounded and disabled. The center's primary objective would be to provide comprehensive support to these individuals, encompassing psychological, health, and social assistance. This support is crucial in aiding their transition to civilian life and helping them overcome the traumas they may have experienced during their armed participation. The center would also prioritize economic empowerment and vocational training programs. These programs would equip the returnees with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the labor market, facilitating their integration into society and enabling them to explore alternative job opportunities.





5. Encourage returnees to complete their education in the stages in which they stopped

It is essential for the local authority to encourage these individuals to resume their education at the level they left off and address the challenges that may hinder their progress. One effective measure is to allocate a percentage of academic seats in universities, scientific institutions, and vocational institutes specifically for recruits returning from the fronts. Furthermore, it is important to address any issues related to expired certificates that may pose obstacles to completing university studies.

6. Coverage of the deficit in civilian job positions of qualified recruits by the Office of Social Affairs and Labor

Numerous civil institutions are currently grappling with a shortage of personnel as a result of the prolonged cessation of public position appointments for over a decade. To address this issue, this paper proposes a recommendation to the Office of Social Affairs and Labor as part of the reintegration process. It suggests that the shortage in staff across various state institutions be addressed by recruiting qualified individuals who have undergone psychological and social rehabilitation programs prior to their appointment. This can be achieved through collaboration with relevant authorities and civil society organizations.

7. Inclusion of returnees in training and rehabilitation programs offered by international and local organizations

To effectively reintegrate young recruits into society, international and local organizations can take proactive steps by incorporating them into their training and rehabilitation programs. This paper strongly recommends prioritizing the involvement of former recruits and discharged young recruits in these initiatives, recognizing the immense value and potential they hold. By providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences, these programs can equip them with the qualifications needed to enter the labor market. By focusing on the specific needs of these young people, international and local organizations can empower them to explore alternative income opportunities. This not only enhances their economic prospects but also facilitates their seamless integration and interaction within society.

To International and Local Civil Society Organizations:

8. Include the demobilization and reintegration file in peace negotiations

International and local organizations have a crucial role to play in advocating and exerting pressure to ensure that the demobilization and reintegration process is given due prominence in peace negotiations. It is imperative that this file is recognized as one of the key components of the negotiations, and subsequently, becomes a central pillar of the peace agreement itself. This recognition is vital as it serves as a guarantee for sustainable peace and security.

9. Support state efforts in the implementation of demobilization and reintegration programs at national and local levels:

International and local organizations can work through establishing a strong and genuine partnership with national and local authorities, ensuring that the recommendations outlined in this paper are implemented effectively. Additionally, these organizations can contribute significantly by actively participating in the formulation and design of the national plan for demobilization and reintegration. Their expertise and experience can help shape a comprehensive and well-rounded plan that addresses the specific needs and challenges of the context.





10. Involve returning recruits and their priorities in the programs of international and local organizations

International and local organizations should prioritize the needs and priorities of returning recruits and incorporate them into the design and implementation of their projects and interventions. It is crucial to avoid marginalizing or neglecting these individuals by actively including them and ensuring their participation in training, rehabilitation, and support programs conducted by these organizations at the local level.

