

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION
OF EX-COMBATANTS: WHAT ROLE FOR
THE EUROPEAN UNION?**

Reintegration Briefing Paper 1.1

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Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: What Role for the European Union?

Reintegration Briefing Paper – 1.1

By Charlotte Watson

Author's Profile

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Prior to joining International Alert, Charlotte worked for the West Africa programme of Save the Children UK and for Edinburgh Global Partnerships in Uganda. Charlotte holds an MSc in Violence, Conflict and Development from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and an MA in Politics from the University of Edinburgh.

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Introduction

A major challenge to improving human security and establishing sustainable peace in countries emerging from violent conflict is how to reintegrate ex-combatants – many of whom are used to making a living through violence – back into society. This involves helping ex-combatants move away from the roles and positions that defined them during the conflict towards identifying themselves as citizens and members of local communities. In such situations, employment and income generation are often the principal concerns of both local people and ex-combatants alike, and are among the key determining factors as to whether those who have been living by the gun are willing to disarm and reintegrate into society. Furthermore, if ex-combatants can play a constructive economic role in the communities to which they return or settle, their presence tends to be seen in a more positive light by these communities. In this context, economic reintegration can also contribute to the complex, long-term process of social reintegration.

However, sustained conflict tends to destroy pre-war economies, infrastructure and markets; break down the public sector; leave land uncultivable due to unexploded ordinance and landmines; and undermine the social relations often at the heart of trading, meaning that livelihood opportunities are scarce. In addition, ex-combatants may have limited levels of education, skills and work experience, further hampering their ability to gain employment.

The *EU Concept for Support to Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration*, agreed in December 2006, states that the ‘Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of former combatants has been identified as a key area for the European Union’s engagement in post-conflict peacebuilding’.¹ This commitment, combined with the increasing focus on human security² as a guiding principle for the EU, offers the opportunity to bridge the divide between security and development approaches and actors in order to enable a holistic, human security-driven approach to DDR, and reintegration specifically.

International Alert is seeking to build on previous initiatives to inform and advance EU thinking on DDR.³ The aim of this paper is to reinvigorate the debate about socio-economic reintegration; provide a platform for linking a broader range of actors who could be involved in ensuring the related aspects of the DDR concept move beyond policy to practice; and to explore what role the EU can play.

This paper is based on ongoing research by Alert, including background research in Burundi, Liberia and Nepal. A draft of the paper was used to inform discussions at an Alert roundtable of the same name, held in Brussels in September 2009, and the paper was subsequently finalised. It provides a discussion of the following points:

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- ¹ *EU Concept for Support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)*, Approved by the European Commission on 14th December 2006 and by the Council of the European Union on 11th December 2006. Available at: http://www.epto.org/documents/EU_Joint_concept_DDR.pdf.
 - ² See for example: *A Secure Europe in a Better World*. European Security Strategy. Brussels, 12th December 2003. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>; *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe’s Security Capabilities*. Barcelona, September 2004. Available at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/HumanSecurityDoctrine.pdf>; *A European Way of Security; The Madrid Report of the Human Security Study Group*. Madrid, November 2007. Available at: http://www.world-governance.org/IMG/pdf_0078_A_European_Way_of_Security.pdf.
 - ³ These include: co-hosting an expert seminar entitled ‘The EU and DDR: Supporting Security and Development’, held in Brussels on 13th July 2006 with the Finnish presidency, and a briefing of the same name available at: http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/EU_DDR_Aug_2006.pdf.

1. Why is socio-economic reintegration important?;
2. Challenges to socio-economic reintegration;
3. Current approaches to socio-economic reintegration;
4. Implementation considerations and challenges; and
5. Recommendations: Enhancing the role of the European Union.

1. Why is Socio-Economic Reintegration Important?

'The reintegration of ex-combatants is especially challenging and is considered to be one of the more difficult phases of DDR. Thus, reintegration needs to be clearly linked to disarmament and demobilisation from the outset. Reintegration into civilian life is integrally connected to the wider socio-economic development of the country, which will determine to what extent it can offer jobs to the demobilised persons, a job that will give them sufficient resources to take care of their families and dependants. In many cases, unemployment can be quite endemic and lack of livelihood might have been one of the sources of the conflict. A great deal depends on sustained external support that can be brought by the International Community to complement and reinforce national efforts. It is especially important to focus on the local communities and their ability to provide jobs and alternative livelihoods through specific projects and programmes. In addition, budget and sector support should take into account the needs of former combatants. At the same time, consideration must be given to ensure balance [sic] support between demobilised ex-combatants and other citizens.'

[EU Concept for Support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Approved by the European Commission on 14th December 2006 and by the Council of the European Union on 11th December 2006, p.12. Available at: http://www.eplo.org/documents/EU_Joint_concept_DDR.pdf.]

- There are multiple, complex challenges in countries emerging from conflict. These often include the presence of large numbers of ex-combatants who have the potential to destabilise any nascent peace process and/or contribute to ongoing or renewed insecurity. Ex-combatants tend to be used to making a living through violence. In addition, given the high levels of youth caught up in conflict, many ex-combatants know no other way of life.
- Reintegration is a difficult and drawn-out process that is influenced by many factors, not least the reason why those involved chose to fight, or ended up fighting, in the first place. However, one of the key factors in determining whether ex-combatants are willing to put down their guns and return to a civilian way of life is if there are appropriate economic and livelihood alternatives open to them.
- When employment opportunities do not materialise, experience has shown that ex-combatants rapidly become frustrated and can engage in protest or disruptive or destructive actions.⁴ In the absence of potential employment opportunities, ex-combatants are likely to resort to illegal activities such as smuggling, illegal mining and weapons trafficking, which can have potentially destabilising effects locally, nationally and regionally.
- In some cases ex-combatants have crossed borders and become insurgents in neighbouring countries, as has been the case in the Mano River countries in West Africa and the Great Lakes region of Africa. In other cases ex-combatants are hired as private security guards or employed by private military companies (PMCs), which risks placing individuals who are often traumatised and accustomed to using violence to protect themselves and resolve conflict in positions of power, where they are charged with maintaining security. If such alternatives to 'decent work'⁵ become widespread, there is a real risk of destabilisation and rising insecurity.

⁴ In Liberia, ex-combatants in Gbarpolu who had been trained in carpentry found that they could not get work, as international NGOs and others were contracting workers from Monrovia.

⁵ The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines 'decent work' as work that meets people's basic aspirations, not only for income but for security for themselves and their families, without discrimination or harassment.

'It is important that ex-combatants find a post-conflict-time equivalent of the role they played during the conflict. If they have a position that gives them a stake in the post-conflict social order, they will help to support this order instead of acting against it. Viewing the ex-combatant as an individual, with ambitions, frustrations and potential thus enhances the chances of devising more suitable reintegration programmes.'

(Irma Specht (2005). *The Role of the Private Sector in DDR Programmes*. Unpublished report., pp 10)

- The consequences of inadequate reintegration rebound at the community, national, regional and even international levels, impacting on the sustainability of peace agreements, stability of states and regions, as well as on crime, security and human security in all contexts.
- Ultimately, the long-term potential for peace, human security and sustainable economic development in a country emerging from conflict is compromised by the inadequate reintegration of ex-combatants.

2. Challenges to Socio-Economic Reintegration

What is socio-economic reintegration?

'Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance'.

(UN Secretary-General, note to the General Assembly (May 2005). A/C.5/59/31 available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/357/15/PDF/N0535715.pdf?OpenElement>.)

'A goal ... to help ex-combatants move away from the roles and positions that defined them during the conflict to identifying themselves (and being identified) as members of families and communities with corresponding responsibilities and opportunities. Depending on the context it will require not only the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society but also reconciliation and rehabilitation, wholesale economic (re)construction, governance and justice reform.'

(Edward Bell and Charlotte Watson (2006). *DDR: Supporting Security and Development. The EU's added value*. International Alert, p.4. Available at: http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/EU_DDR_Aug_2006.pdf.)

'Creating employment opportunities is a key element of successful reintegration, although a challenging one, since the absorption capacity of war-torn economies is extremely limited. It goes hand in hand with efforts to increase the employability of ex-combatants, so that they can benefit from the jobs that are created.'

(Irma Specht (2007). *Socio-Economic Profiling and Opportunity Mapping Manual*. Norwegian Defence International Centre (NODEFIC) and Transition International pp1.)

- Evidence from a wide range of programmes created to assist the *economic reintegration of former combatants* suggests that many such *initiatives have been ineffective*. In particular, there has often been a lack of pre-planning and labour market analysis to ensure that the opportunities offered in the reintegration packages meet the potential and existing employment market opportunities.
- Ex-combatants often end up under the impression that they will be able to engage in income-generating activities after they complete vocational training courses and programmes. However, in countries emerging from conflict, *economic systems are often in disarray*, afflicted by the breakdown of economic markets and the development of non-monetary economies, combined with minimal levels of public and private investment and low levels of government revenues. In such a situation job opportunities are rare.

'Many Liberians, however, informed the assessment mission that the reintegration programme has failed to provide sustainable alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants. The majority of ex-combatants are still unemployed and thousands have regrouped for the purpose of illegally exploiting natural resources in diamond and gold mining areas, as well as on rubber plantations.'

(15th Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia. S/2007/479. available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Liberia%20S2007%20479.pdf>)

- In the past *poor planning has led to ex-combatants being given training in inappropriate skills*, for example computer skills training in areas where there is no electricity, or too many

being trained in the same area so that supply outstrips demand. Attention also tends to be focused on traditional skills such as carpentry, farming, masonry and soap-making, rather than balancing this with a strategic approach to emerging growth areas, such as mobile phone repair. There is a need to ensure that the opportunities that are offered are seen by ex-combatants as being a desirable alternative to fighting and are also viable in the context of local labour markets.

- Problems can arise from the *inability of ex-combatants to compete with established traders/craftsmen* after the relatively brief skills training offered as part of the reintegration package. In addition they may face bias by employers, who are often fearful of the impact that hiring an ex-combatant may have on their business and their personal security. This is compounded by the fact that ex-combatants may have limited levels of education, skills and work experience, further hampering their ability to gain employment.
- In the face of *climate change, livelihood opportunities and a community's ability to sustain and support itself will be further challenged*. Care will need to be taken to ensure that reintegration opportunities take this into account, and that training and jobs are not based on areas that may not be sustainable.
- The ability to find or pursue economic and livelihood opportunities is further complicated and integrally linked to the *dynamics within host communities*. Where ex-combatants return to their place of origin, settle in their area of displacement or move to new communities, substantial pressure is often placed on the host communities into which they settle.
- This can be reflected in *gender relations*, whereby men may feel threatened by the more assertive roles assumed by women during the period of armed conflict, and may attempt to force them back into more traditional gendered roles. For example, in countries that are characterised by patriarchal societies and where women fought as combatants, as in the case of the Maoists in Nepal, women have often been unwilling to return to their previous subservient positions once peace has been secured. In other cases, women and girls who were associated with fighting forces and/or became “bush wives” often encounter huge difficulties, discrimination and stigmatisation when they try to return to their communities of origin.
- There are also significant *age dynamics* to reintegration. For many young men who have grown up and been socialised in a highly militarised environment, reintegration is a difficult process, particularly because many are unwilling to re-submit to traditional age-related roles and responsibilities, which usually include deference to their elders.
- The *timeframes for reintegration activities are too short*. Reintegration is a lengthy, complex process but activities are usually planned and implemented within the constraints of a time-bound programme.

Liberia: ex-combatants, employment and natural resources

‘Lacking employment and livelihood opportunities, ex-combatants in Liberia have been involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources. Most prominently, two of Liberia’s major rubber plantations have been illegally occupied by ex-combatants after the end of hostilities in 2003. In 2006 UNMIL and the Government of Liberia have strengthened their efforts to reach a peaceful resolution to the occupancy of rubber plantations by ex-combatants. Within the framework of a Joint Government–UN Task Force, UNMIL assisted the Government to re-establish state authority over Guthrie, one of the two plantations that have been occupied by ex-combatants. The security situation in Guthrie has improved dramatically through these interventions, and Liberia National Police as well as a

Magistrate Court are now serving communities living inside the plantation. More than 200 registered ex-combatants who resided on the plantation have registered for participation in the reintegration and rehabilitation programme, and most of them have re-located to their counties of origin. Others have decided to remain in the plantation and seek employment with the new management team, which the Government has established as an interim measure, until a credible investor has been found.'

Source: United Nations Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Resource Centre website. 'Country Programme: Liberia'. Available at: <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=52#challenges>.

Planning for reintegration in Burundi

'The Burundian reintegration programme was informed by a Burundian committee, which had been set up during the Arusha negotiations to draw up plans for socio-economic reintegration. This committee identified a number of sectors and activities in which the ex-combatants could be reintegrated: crafts sector, income-generating activities, specific trades, agriculture and cattle breeding. However, neither the Burundian committee nor the international experts involved considered carrying out a thorough economic context analysis in order to assess the absorption capacity of the Burundian economy, or tried to determine the specific qualifications for which there would be sufficient demand in the post-conflict setting of the country.'" (pp. 17)

'A recommendation for the future is to map high-risk groups and make an inventory of economic opportunities. First, a thorough analysis of the socio-economic context of Burundi is required to determine what economic possibilities there are for ex-combatants. Second, it is necessary to engage in the profiling of specific target groups within the expected caseload of ex-combatants to be reintegrated. Third, a realistic risk analysis should identify specific geographical areas and be used to identify priority groups within such areas. The expected outcome of this exercise is a map of economic opportunities for specific target groups in geographical areas, which allows interested parties to actively intervene to help enhance stability in Burundi.' *(adapted from pp. 36 & 37)*

Source: Pyt Douma with Jean Marie Gasana. Leontine Specker (Ed.) (October 2008). *Reintegration in Burundi: Between happy cows and lost investments. A case study on reintegration of ex-combatants in Burundi*, carried out for the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael.

3. Current Approaches to Socio-Economic Reintegration

'The ultimate objective of DDR processes is the social and economic reintegration of former combatants in order to contribute to sustainable peace, reconciliation of society, stability and long-term development.

[...]

'DDR programmes need to be well-targeted, focusing on ex-combatants and their dependants as appropriate over a certain period of time. So while reintegration processes will continue over many years, specific and time-limited reintegration programmes will come to an end. Instead long-term reintegration efforts should be integrated into broader development programmes. Thus, development programmes in this context should take into account the reintegration needs of former combatants without necessarily labelling them as such.'

Source: *EU Concept for Support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)*. Approved by the European Commission on 14th December 2006 and by the Council of the European Union on 11th December 2006, p.12. Available at: http://www.eplo.org/documents/EU_Joint_concept_DDR.pdf

- During the past decade, considerable resources and thinking have been devoted to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (into civilian life) of ex-combatants in countries emerging from armed conflict. The disarmament and demobilisation components have tended to receive the most attention and funding, as they are relatively short-term processes, and their effectiveness is easier to determine and measure.
- The *reintegration component of DDR has often been under-funded, characterised by an absence of long-term strategic vision*, appropriate planning and creative strategies. It has also been neglected from a monitoring and evaluation perspective.
- In recent years this balance has started to shift and there have been several international *initiatives to collect and disseminate 'good practice' on reintegration*.⁶ These include the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), which state that 'the sustainable social and economic reintegration of former combatants' is 'the ultimate objective of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration'.⁷
- There is still some *debate between practitioners* who believe that reintegration should be *short-term* and focus purely on the immediate security concerns posed by ex-combatants and practitioners who emphasise the need for a *long-term, sustainable approach* to reintegration involving activities that support communities as well as individuals.
- In this context there is a need to *distinguish between short-term reinsertion and longer-term reintegration*. The UN IDDRS defines "reinsertion" as 'the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term,

⁶ See for example: the UN Integrated Standards on DDR available at the United Nations Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Resource Centre at <http://www.unddr.org/>; Leontine Specker, (September 2008) *The R-Phase of DDR Processes: An Overview of Key Lesson Learned and Practical Experiences*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael; and *The OECD DAC Handbook on SSR: Supporting Security and Justice* available at http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_37417926_1_1_1_1,00.html.

⁷ The UN Integrated Standards on DDR (IDDRS), [op. cit.], Section 4.30, Summary, 'Social and Economic Reintegration' available at: <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/04/30.php>

continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year'.⁸

- It is necessary to *focus on a way to stimulate job creation* but at the same time there is a need to equip ex-combatants with the necessary skills to carry out available jobs. “Up-skilling”, or increasing the employability of individuals, is therefore a key part of socio-economic reintegration.
- There is a need to explore the *role that different actors could play*, particularly those who do not traditionally perceive reintegration as relevant to their operations.
- The *role that local businesses could play* in contributing positively to the security situation is relatively unexplored. However, for the majority of business actors, while recognising there are concerns⁹ about engaging in essentially political processes, it is in their interest to work towards a more sustainable peace and they are often uniquely placed to do so. Examples include offering jobs and/or training to ex-combatants.

The role of the domestic private sector in Colombia

Reintegration in Colombia has been a huge challenge, partly because it is not taking place within the context of a formal programme. After many setbacks, national and local authorities refined the approach in a bid to win private-sector support for reintegration activities. Support from the Ministry of the Interior resulted in the collaboration of 35 private sector companies whose input varied from offering training and apprenticeships to full-time jobs. The progress that has been made in developing the links with the private sector was demonstrated by a meeting in June 2007, convened by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at which more than 1,000 business leaders met to discuss the role they could play in reintegration.

- The relevance of *ensuring that development actors are involved* from the start, or at least informed, in reintegration programmes is particularly pertinent coming from a human security perspective. Not only are development actors often working in communities before such programmes are implemented but it is likely they will be there long after initiatives such as DDR are “completed” and so can be involved in follow-up work and ensuring sustainability. Furthermore, many development activities can actively contribute to the economic reintegration process, for example through infrastructure projects which involve job creation, micro-finance initiatives and the establishment of community user-groups for resources such as forestry.

Fostering social and economic reintegration and reconciliation in Rwanda

Between May 2007 and April 2009 International Alert implemented a project in Rwanda that aimed to contribute to Rwanda’s reconciliation process. The project included an “economic reintegration” element due to findings that strongly indicated that an individual’s ability to engage with a reconciliation process is significantly influenced by their economic condition. Micro-finance was chosen as the tool for improving the economic conditions of individuals due to its ability to reach the poor. The project’s target group consisted of genocide survivors, ex-prisoners accused of taking part in the genocide, and

⁸ UN Secretary-General, note to the General Assembly, A/C.5/59/31, May 2005 [available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/357/15/PDF/N0535715.pdf?OpenElement>]

⁹ For a more detailed account of the pros and cons for local businesses engaging in security aspects of peacebuilding see Chapter 4 ‘The role of local business in addressing the security dimensions of peacebuilding’ *Local Business, Local Peace: the Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector*. (July 2006). International Alert: London.

ex-combatants. Objectives included improving the economic potential of vulnerable people among the genocide survivors, former combatants and former prisoners identified in the project's pilot districts; and creating opportunities for exchange and discussion within the target group in order to bolster social cooperation and limit the risk of conflict at a family and community level.

Linking DDDR* activities with community development in Liberia

'In some villages in northern counties in Liberia, there have been situations where DDR initiatives and work by development agencies have undermined each other. Negative impacts have, for example, resulted from development organisations contracting workers from Monrovia and transporting them to the village where a project is being implemented, rather than employing local ex-combatants who have been through skills training as part of the DDDR process. This has inevitably led to frustrations on the part of the ex-combatants, some of whom have suggested that if this continues they might seek out alternative sources of income, for example by engaging in illicit diamond mining.

'In contrast, there are cases where parallel projects have been coordinated so that, by targeting both ex-combatants and civilians, they can mutually reinforce reintegration and reconciliation at the community level. One such project is the €867,224 grant from the EC delegation in Liberia to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to carry out a peace and stabilization project in southeastern Liberia. Implementation began in September 2005 with an implementation period of one year.

'The overall objectives of the project are to improve security in three counties (Maryland, River Gee and Grand Kru) by alleviating immediate frustrations among beneficiaries. The proposal suggests that this will be achieved by providing work opportunities so that civilians and ex-combatants can work together to improve local infrastructure, initiate an increase in economic turnover and promote a more reconciled and peaceful environment. From the inception stage, it has been anticipated that this community development approach, providing employment opportunities to all community members, ex-combatant or otherwise, would encourage the reintegration process by providing the means through which formally opposing groups could work together to solve common problems. The main target group is unemployed ex-combatants (60 percent) and unemployed civilians (40 percent). An average of 1,500 people will be included in the project per month throughout the year and up to 4,500 people may become direct beneficiaries over the 12 months. The full population of 269,000 will benefit indirectly. The main project activities include the rehabilitation of 500km of roads and repairs to 16 minor bridges and other infrastructure as prioritised by the communities.'

Source: E. Bell and C. Watson (2006). *DDR: Supporting Security and Development. The EU's added value. International Alert*, p.4.) Available at: http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/EU_DDR_Aug_2006.pdf.

* In Liberia the process that was undertaken was called a "DDRR" programme, where the first "r" stood for "rehabilitation" and the second for "reintegration".

The role of the private sector in reintegration in Burundi

'In Burundi there are at present very few opportunities within the formal private sector to play a role in the reintegration of ex-combatants. Private security firms seem to be one of the few types of businesses to have recruited ex-combatants, but this concerns mostly ex-FAB [Forces Armées Burundaises (Burundian Armed Forces) soldiers who retired at a young age. In the informal sector a small number of ex-combatants have become motor taxi drivers. However, in general it is difficult to employ ex-combatants as many are illiterate and their behaviour can be problematic. Furthermore, the Burundian economy is not capable of absorbing 30,000 ex-combatants, and the overall socio-economic context is not amenable to job creation. At the level of the GoB [Government of Burundi]

there is a lack of planning capacity and strategic insight into what is required to help reintegrate ex-combatants. Furthermore, there should be clear incentives for private entrepreneurs to participate in job creation programmes for specific target groups.'

Source: Pyt Douma with Jean Marie Gasana. Leontine Specker (Ed.) (October 2008). *Reintegration in Burundi: between happy cows and lost investments*, p. 8. A case study on reintegration of ex-combatants in Burundi, carried out for the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael.

Nepal: Business and community perceptions of reintegration of former combatants

Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA) and International Alert conducted a survey of 207 corporate business representatives. 'They were asked whether they would 'consider employing the following types of people' – with greatly varying responses: 45.4 percent said they would hire former members of the Nepal Army; and 38.6 percent and 37.2 percent, respectively, expressed willingness to give jobs to former members of the Nepali police or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Respondents expressed a great deal less enthusiasm at the prospect of recruiting former members of armed groups, or youth wings of political parties: ex-PLA [People's Liberation Army] (15.9); former members of Young Communist League (YCL) (9.2); previous Youth Force members (9.7); Raksha Bahini (11.1); Tarun Dal (9.7).^{*} Former members of local armed groups, according to respondents, would find it most difficult to be hired by businesspeople: only 5.8 percent said they would be willing to employ them. [...]

'In-depth interview respondents were again divided on the issue of giving priority to employing former members of the Nepali army, police, People's Liberation Army (PLA), YCL, and local armed groups. Those who felt such priorities should not be given believed that all people should have equal rights to employment and employees should be selected on the basis of skills and qualifications. They felt that giving such priority would mean incompetent people would get jobs ... [and that] 'there should be fair competition among all and those who have skills and qualifications should be hired. Politically mobilised people should not be given space in the army or police because these two institutions are the most important security institutions of the State'. However, others were of the view that such formers members should be given priority while hiring, especially from rebel groups. They stated it would help re-socialise those people.'

Source: L. Alexander, C. Gündüz, D.B. Subedi (2009). *What role for business in "post-conflict" economic recovery? Perspectives from Nepal*, p.31. Strengthening the Economic Dimensions of Peacebuilding Case Study Series. International Alert, London.

^{*} YCL, Raksha Bahini and Tarun Dal are the political youth wings of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) and Nepali Congress, respectively.

Resources on International DDR Programmes and Lessons Learnt

- The UN Integrated Standards on DDR and the UN DDR Resource Centre: <http://www.unddr.org/>;
- The International DDR Congress (CIDDR in Spanish), held in Cartagena de Indias in May 2009: <http://ciddr.org/areas-ciddr/que/>;
- The Stockholm Initiative on DDR (SIDDR), a year-long process convened by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2004: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4890>;
- The Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (MDRP) that focused on a comprehensive, region-wide approach to support activities in seven countries: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. This officially closed in June 2009 but resources are available at: <http://www.mdrp.org/>.

4. Implementation Considerations and Challenges

While there has been increasing recognition of the need to prioritise the reintegration aspect of DDR programmes, and particularly the economic dimensions of these, it has proved far harder to put this into practice. This is partly because of the conditions under which reintegration activities are planned and implemented: insecure, politically sensitive and charged environments with economies that are often devastated and/or have limited absorption capacity. However, it is also because there are still a number of other challenges and considerations that need to be addressed by those involved in the funding, planning and implementation of reintegration initiatives. These include:

Early planning for reintegration: DDR is very sensitive and little can be done until a political agreement has been reached and implementing agencies are asked to plan activities. When this happens, time is of the essence and the focus (and funding) usually lands squarely on the DD part. However, there are steps that can be taken prior to the peace process and in parallel with sensitive negotiations to prepare the way for reintegration and to ensure that activities are: based on accurate information; are realistic given the economic situation of the country; and meet both ex-combatant expectations and community needs.

Some aspects which can be covered in early planning include:

- Labour market analysis and opportunity mapping,¹⁰ which can establish the areas with the most employment absorption capacity and areas where training would be required;
- Preparing training resources that are context-specific and will help build the skills of ex-combatants so that they can have a competitive chance in the market;
- Ensuring that there are skilled trainers to run training sessions, assessing the available infrastructure (training rooms/spaces, etc.) needed for planned activities; and
- Working with development agencies already in situ to ensure they are part of the longer-term planning and implementation process.

It is vital to gather enough information at an early stage so that activities are planned to ensure that the appropriate education and skills are imparted.

Ensuring adequate and flexible funding is available: Trust Funds, such as the UN Trust Fund in Liberia and the World Bank Trust Fund for the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (MDRP) in the Great Lakes, are increasingly being used to finance reintegration activities as part of wider DDR programmes. They provide a convenient way for donors to coordinate activities within an overarching framework and ensure buy-in from host governments. This is obviously vital and also allows donors to contribute substantial funding to a DDR programme where there may not be sufficient national capacity to manage the programme. However, channelling funding through Trust Funds has serious implications for economic reintegration, both in terms of funding and flexibility. Often the funding is front-loaded for disarmament and demobilisation activities, leaving little for reintegration. In addition, with money tied up in the Fund, there is little flexibility to adapt activities, be proactive about seizing opportunities and take an innovative approach to linking reintegration initiatives with ongoing development or

¹⁰ For detailed, practical information on this process, see: Irma Specht (2007). *Socio-Economic Profiling and Opportunity Mapping Manual*. Norwegian Defence International Centre (NODEFIC) and Transition International, available at http://www.transitioninternational.com/?Portfolio_and_Services:Recent_Publications.

economic activities. Furthermore, if the political process stalls – as has been the case in Nepal – donors may find that their funding is effectively tied up, leaving minimal capacity to support important ongoing activities in the margins.

Understanding the economy of the country: One of the key factors often overlooked when planning reintegration activities is the huge role played by the informal sector in countries affected by conflict. Given the state of the economy, many (if not most) of the employment opportunities are likely to be found, or end up, in the informal sector. While it would be ideal to secure renewed investment in the formal sector and more jobs, there is a need to be realistic about what is possible in the short- to medium-term and establish where jobs are available. However, the informal sector is usually subject to little, if any, regulation and information is patchy. This needs to be taken into account when devising economic reintegration strategies.

Clear information about the economic opportunities available: Myths and rumours play a key role in conflict and in peace processes and can have devastating effects.¹¹ If accurate information is not widely disseminated about reintegration aims, opportunities and indeed the packages on offer, then take-up can be affected, expectations raised and local communities antagonised. The latter is a particular risk if rumours circulate about monetary benefits being given to ex-combatants with no corresponding information about any conditions that may be attached to this, or accurate details of what the real sums involved are.

During one round of DDR in the Ivory Coast there were rumours circulating that ex-combatants were being given a cash payment of US\$900 as part of the overall DDR programme – three times the sum on offer in neighbouring Liberia. When investigated further it was revealed that this was in fact the estimated monetary value of training and toolkits given to ex-combatants, as well as the transitional safety allowance (TSA) paid in cash. However, once misinformation is circulated it is far harder to correct it.

From the perspective of the ex-combatants, misinformation can lead to unrealistic expectations about the kind of jobs that may be available, which in turn can exacerbate tensions and lead to a refusal to take up training or employment opportunities, or unwillingness to maintain commitment.

A communications strategy needs to be developed in conjunction with reintegration activities to ensure that all parties (including ex-combatants and receiving communities) are given accurate information about the realities of reintegration programmes. This should include media material (including tools accessible to those who are illiterate) and wider outreach programmes.

Community radio programming in Nepal*

In Nepal there are numerous local FM radio stations and radio programmes are often the primary means by which people access information from Kathmandu and their district headquarters. During the last three years International Alert has been working with locally based media organisations to stimulate debate and provide information on security-related issues. Most recently this has been in relation to the development of a Justice and Security Sector Reform (JSSR) programme in Nepal, which also encompasses the thorny issue of the integration of cadre from the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) into the national army or back into civilian life. By training local reporters, stimulating debate on security issues and broadcasting accurate information, the project aims to build civil-society knowledge, awareness and capacity to generate and participate in JSSR policy discussions at the local, regional and national level.

*See <http://www.international-alert.org/nepal/index.php?t=1> for more information.

¹¹ For more on this specific issue, see: *Les Mots Qui Tuent: Rumeurs, préjugés, stéréotypes et mythes parmi les peuples des pays des Grands Lacs d'Afrique*. International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/Les_Mots_Qui_Tuent.pdf.

Situating economic reintegration initiatives within broader peacebuilding and development efforts: There still remains some scepticism from both camps about linking reintegration with development. However, reintegration is a small piece of a much bigger puzzle and it is essential that steps are taken to close the gap between reintegration, humanitarian response and longer economic recovery.

In addition, by equipping ex-combatants to contribute to the reconstruction process they become part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Used to working as a team and instilled with a sense of discipline and loyalty to their commanders, the idea that ex-combatants could work effectively as a group reconstructing civilian infrastructure and roads, amongst other things, has been raised on a number of occasions but not sufficiently explored.

While the debates about the links between security and development are ongoing, there is emerging consensus that the two are inextricably entwined. Indeed the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) states, ‘Security is a precondition of development. Conflict not only destroys infrastructure, including social infrastructure; it also encourages criminality, deters investment and makes normal economic activity impossible.’¹²

Overcoming employer fears/suspicion of hiring ex-combatants: There is a growing consensus that the private sector can – and should – play an important role in socio-economic reintegration, given the need for livelihood and employment opportunities. However, there are obviously a number of reasons why employers may feel less than comfortable about employing or being associated with ex-combatants. Some employers fear that they will be stigmatised by the community they live in, that the ex-combatant(s) may damage their business or property, or threaten their family, and that they may not have the skills or the commitment to adequately fulfil their role.

If the true potential of the private sector is going to be realised then its role has to be properly thought-out; incentives for engagement have to be developed, and support systems and assurance put in place. Incentives might include subsidising apprenticeships or salaries for ex-combatants, hence initially providing the employer with cheaper labour. In addition, efforts have a better chance of success if they can show how successful reintegration is better for business and, consequently, profits. Engaging businesses on their own terms holds the most chance of success.¹³

Engaging communities: A recurring theme in reintegration is the need to ensure that receiving communities are involved in the process, as ex-combatants will be returning, settling or trying to build new lives and livelihood in these communities. However, when it comes to putting the theory into practice there are major, often yawning, gaps. In reality, the engagement of local actors in the design and planning of reintegration programmes is dependent on two main factors:

- The readiness and ability of donor agencies and national governments hosting DDR programmes to solicit the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local populations; and
- That the relevant stakeholders understand the initiatives and have the capacity and will to engage constructively in consultation processes, and believe that their views will be taken into consideration and acted upon.

Participation is complex and complicated. The very security situation that programming aims to improve impacts on programme planners’ mobility and on citizens’ willingness to speak openly and honestly about their fears and the challenges they face. In addition, substantive participation in such processes requires time and effort, and often this is not adequately appreciated. Furthermore, real care needs to be taken to ensure that the “silent” voices are heard, rather than reinforcing

¹² *A Secure Europe in a better world*. European Security Strategy. Brussels, 12th December 2003, p.2.

¹³ For further examples of how businesses have been drawn into reintegration activities, see International Alert (July 2006) Chapter 4, *Local business, local peace: The peacebuilding potential of the domestic private sector*. International Alert. London.

existing hierarchies in which the perspectives of more vulnerable members of the community are not taken into account. There is no easy answer, but if communities are involved from the beginning and made aware of the reintegration process and the reasons for it, then there is an increased chance that they will support any subsequent initiatives.

'Community support is essential for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants, but their presence may make worse the real or perceived vulnerability of local populations, which have neither the capacity nor the desire to assist a 'lost generation' of ex-fighters with little education, employment or training; war trauma; and a highly militarized view of the world. Unsupported former combatants can be a major threat to a community's capacity to recover because of their lack of skills or assets, their tendency to rely on violence to get what they want, and their ignorance of or disrespect for local cultures, leaders and social habits.'

Source: United Nations Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Resource Centre website. Section 4.30, Summary. 'Social and Economic Reintegration' at: <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/04/30.php>.

Recognising that ex-combatants have differing economic needs and opportunities: Ex-combatants are not a homogenous group and this means that the type of support, training and skills that they will need to secure employment will vary greatly. Care needs to be taken to establish the priorities and needs of different groups and ensure that appropriate, targeted support is given. For example, a large proportion of ex-combatants are often young men who have little life experience apart from fighting, and often little chance of returning to their home communities (particularly if these are rural) when job opportunities are more likely to be available in cities. They may also fear the reception they might encounter. Women involved in fighting or associated with fighting forces face different challenges, and while this is now recognised there is still a tendency to train them in traditional skills such as tie-dye rather than mapping out what the most appropriate and sustainable options for them are. Children are another key group and pose a particularly difficult case, especially if they were recruited as children but are now aged over 18 and therefore not eligible for targeted assistance packages given as part of child DDR.

5. Recommendations: Enhancing the Role of the European Union

'The EU is able to bring together a bandwidth of capacities to conduct a full range of actions needed to support DDR, ranging from crisis management and peace building to support to democratic governance processes, the rule of law and human rights, and long-term development. Efforts should be made to mainstream DDR into the various EU activities in a partner country.'

Source: *EU Concept for Support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)*, p.24. Approved by the European Commission on 14th December 2006 and by the Council of the European Union on 11th December 2006. Available at: http://www.eplo.org/documents/EU_Joint_concept_DDR.pdf

As a major actor in the security sphere,¹⁴ the EU has competencies and funding instruments that can be used to implement security, development, governance and justice activities. Combined effectively, and reinforced through political dialogue, these elements can play a fundamental role in driving and sustaining the kind of support which is necessary to ensure long-term reintegration and contribute to improving human security more broadly.

The potential impact of this role could, however, be further enhanced. In order to facilitate this, the EU and member states should:

- Assess who they already work with in the context of reintegration and who could/should be brought into this process. This could include establishing how development-focused staff and development knowledge and expertise can be drawn on. A specific area to be explored is the role of the private sector and how it could be strengthened.
- Explore whether the EC, the EU, EU Member States and other related actors could carry out joint assessment missions and/or develop a more efficient method of sharing information that is gained.
- Map the funding instruments and mechanisms that are currently used to support reintegration-related activities. Is there a way to support trust funds while maintaining some funds which can be used more flexibly while retaining accountability?
- Develop effective tools for engaging communities and, in this context, communication strategies to facilitate local-level awareness and understanding of reintegration initiatives.
- Conduct training and sensitisation for development-focused staff on reintegration issues so that the work reflects priorities and has greater impact.

¹⁴ To date, there have been 17 ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) missions (some ongoing and some completed) around the world. These missions cover a broad spectrum, including military operations (e.g. EUFOR Althea), security sector reform (e.g. EUSEC DR Congo), institution-building (e.g. EUJUST Lex Iraq) as well as police and rule of law missions.

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