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Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in  
Post-Conflict Societies

# Reintegrating Ex-Combatants





# Foreword

State fragility and recently established peace agreements in a post-conflict setting create situations of insecurity and the risk of return to war. In this situation processes of Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DD&R) can be an important tool for development co-operation to positively influence the situation. Demobilisation and disarmament of ex-combatants are often a part of peace agreements and therefore implemented in a post-conflict setting. Reintegration is however frequently overlooked. As a consequence, support to the reintegration phase has often been insufficient. Also, since reintegration is the weakest link in DD&R, there are no general theories on reintegration.

This paper, commissioned by Sida to the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, aims both to improve knowledge regarding reintegration and to identify the role of development co-operation in this process. By looking at certain factors in a society; physical security, economic security, political influence and social reintegration of ex-combatants, this study sets out to understand circumstances that are essential to reintegration, and what culprits to avoid. In particular, it recommends certain precautions, steps and strategies that donors and their partners need to take into consideration when promoting reintegration through development co-operation.

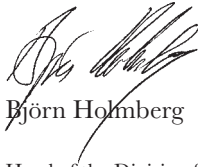
The Swedish Policy for Global Development (2003) recognises conflict management and security as one of

several central component elements that should apply to all policy areas. During the past years, the Division for Peace and Security in Development Co-operation at Sida has initiated a number of studies in order to enhance Sida's understanding of violent conflicts and insecurity. This study on the reintegration of ex-combatants in post-conflict societies will hopefully encourage better approaches in the promotion of peace and security through development co-operation.



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# Content

Executive Summary.....	3
1 Introduction .....	13
1.1 Defining Ex-Combatants .....	14
1.2 Ex-Combatants — A Challenge for Post-Conflict Societies.....	17
2 Defining Reintegration .....	22
2.1 An Alternative Definition .....	26
3 Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration ...	30
3.1 Two Views of DD&R.....	31
3.2 The Interdependence of DD&R.....	33
4 Reintegration: A Theoryless Field .....	35
5 Finding Peacetime Substitutes for the Benefits of War .....	39
5.1 The Physical Security of Ex-Combatants .....	39
5.2 The Economic Security of Ex-Combatants .....	43
5.3 The Political Influence of Ex-Combatants.....	48
5.4 Safeguarding the Societal Prestige of Ex-Combatants .....	51
6 Healing the Wounds of War .....	54
6.1 Reconciliation .....	54
6.2 The Psychological Traumas of Ex-Combatants..	59

7	Contextual Factors that Make Reintegration More Difficult.....	62
	7.1 Armed Groups.....	62
	7.2 Spoils .....	64
	7.3 Lack of Disarmament .....	65
	7.4 Security Vacuum.....	68
8	Ex-Combatants — A Heterogeneous Group .....	71
	8.1 Female Ex-Combatants .....	71
	8.2 Child Soldiers .....	75
	8.3 Ex-Combatants with Different Military Ranks ..	78
	8.4 Type of Warring Faction.....	79
	8.5 Rural or Urban Environment .....	82
9	National Ownership.....	85
10	When Should Reintegration Assistance End? .....	88
11	Concluding Remarks and Recommendations .....	92
12	Bibliography .....	100

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# Executive Summary

The reintegration of ex-combatants is an integral part of the demilitarisation of post-war societies. While institutions based on democratic norms and the rule of law need to replace military ones, armies must be demobilised and combatants disarmed. A proper demilitarisation is necessary to create an environment of trust and security, which is essential for any peace process to be successful. Demilitarisation, however, not only solves problems. It also generates new challenges. As warring parties dissolve and large numbers of ex-combatants are released into civilian life, society is faced with three main challenges: a) ex-combatants often pose a threat to post-war security, b) the atrocities committed by ex-combatants may create severe tensions with civilians who have suffered at their hands, and c) certain groups of weak and marginalized ex-combatants may need special assistance for humanitarian reasons. If these challenges — especially the security threat that former combatants pose — are not taken seriously, ex-combatants may re-engage in violence, rendering post-war reconstruction and peace building impossible. Despite the growing attention given to reintegration efforts in the past 15 years, our knowledge of the problem is still limited. To make our work more effective, it is necessary to sum up current knowledge and assess what challenges reintegration processes face in the future. The purpose of this study is therefore threefold: 1) How do we define reintegration? 2) What theoretical explanations

are there for explaining when reintegration is successful?  
3) Based on our theoretical knowledge and experiences from different reintegration processes, how can we make reintegration efforts more effective (Chapter 1)?

Based on an inventory of different definitions, this study argues that reintegration should be seen as *a societal process aiming at the economic, political and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society*. This definition differs in three ways from many others. First, reintegration not only has economic and social dimensions; it also has political ones. Failing to realise this can have dire consequences as ex-combatants who cannot influence the decisions that affect them may be prone to take to arms. Donors should therefore also seek to assimilate ex-combatants politically. Second, reintegration should not be equated with programmes planned and funded by donors. It is instead a broad societal process involving many actors, especially local ones. The ex-combatants, their families, and local communities are the ones who do most of the reintegration work. If donors do not take this into account the result may be that external programmes do not support local reintegration processes. Finally, the target group should exclusively be ex-combatants and their families. Other groups — such as refugees, sex slaves, or women who have been forcibly married to guerrilla fighters — have their own needs, and specific reintegration processes must be crafted for them. Including these other groups in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DD&R) processes for former combatants will make their reintegration more difficult. This does not preclude reintegration programmes for ex-combatants from also giving assistance to receiving communities or refugees returning to the same areas in order to prevent societal tension and increase the capacity of local communities to reintegrate ex-combatants. However, in these situations, ex-combatants are still the target group since the purpose of assistance is to facilitate their assimilation (Chapter 2).

It is important to remember that reintegration is an integral part of DD&R and cannot be planned or carried out in isolation. The DD&R process should be addressed



as early as possible in the peace process and include all stakeholders. This is especially true concerning reintegration as it is often neglected in the early phases of the negotiations. At this stage, the focus should be on defining the target group for reintegration assistance and assessing its needs. There must be some flexibility in the sequencing of DD&R processes, as a strict adherence to the tradition of disarmament followed by demobilisation and reintegration may be inappropriate. It might be necessary to launch disarmament drives after the completion of demobilisation and groups that previously stood outside the peace process may need to be demobilised during the reintegration phase. Launching DD&R processes without first finding a political solution to the conflict should be avoided (Chapter 3).

The research dealing with the reintegration of former combatants is still underdeveloped. There are, at present, no theoretical explanations to help us understand when reintegration tends to be successful. Instead, there are statements and assumptions of what is believed to hinder ex-combatants from reengaging in different sorts of violence. Even though these statements are not founded on scientific research, they are still of interest as they are based on actual experience from attempts to reintegrate ex-combatants. These assumptions all revolve around three central themes: a) the need to find peacetime *substitutes* for the benefits of war, b) the need to *heal* the wounds of war, and c) the need to deal with *contextual factors* that make reintegration more difficult (Chapter 4).

Based on the factors that are considered to facilitate reintegration, discussed in Chapter 4, and experiences from different reintegration processes, Chapters 5—7 discuss how we can practically work with the issues of finding peacetime substitutes for the benefits of war, healing the wounds of war, and dealing with the contextual challenges. Chapter 5 addresses four different forms of substitutes: a) ensuring ex-combatants' physical security, b) their economic security, c) their political influence and d) finding ways to make sure that they do not lose the societal prestige gained during the armed conflict.

In Chapter 6, the issue of healing is discussed, with a focus on two issues: a) reconciliation and b) psychological trauma of ex-combatants. Finally Chapter 7 addresses the four contextual factors that make reintegration more difficult: a) the existence of armed groups standing outside the peace process — spoilers — or groups fighting wars in neighbouring countries, b) access to natural resources that are easily looted — so called spoils, c) the availability of arms in society, and d) security vacuums in weak and war-torn states.

Donors must be aware that ex-combatants are by no means a homogenous group. On the contrary, there are several subcategories, all of which have their own specific needs. If a distinction is not made between relevant groups, reintegration assistance may do little good or can even be counterproductive. Chapter 8 discusses which subcategories must be given special attention. Focus should always be given to female ex-combatants and child soldiers, not because they are always passive victims, but because they are the ones who are most likely to become marginalised in post-war societies. Other groups may, however, also require special attention, for example high and middle-ranking officers. The form which assistance must take also differs depending on the environment in which reintegration is done. Is it in urban or rural areas or countries with advanced economies?

Based on the assumption that national ownership of reintegration processes is preferable, Chapter 9 seeks to identify some of the most common problems of delegating ownership. This includes the danger of equating national ownership with governmental ownership, which tends to exclude important stakeholders. Another problem is the lack of ownership by the ex-combatants themselves and local communities. Finally, national ownership constitutes a specific problem in extremely weak states. The study thereafter gives some suggestions on how these obstacles can be overcome. Chapter 10 argues that even though reintegration assistance should be as short term as possible, the 1–3 year duration of most current programmes is too short.

Finally, more practical recommendations are made in the following for how development co-operation can be improved in the work of reintegrating ex-combatants and their families in post-conflict societies (Chapter 11).

- I. *When should reintegration assistance be given?* Targeted support to ex-combatants is only warranted if a) they constitute a security threat to the new peace order, b) the atrocities that ex-combatants may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts in society, or c) certain categories of ex-combatants cannot support themselves due to economic, political, or social marginalisation.
- II. *When should reintegration assistance not be given?* The giving of assistance should be avoided when a) there is no peace agreement that solves or regulates the incompatibility of the warring parties, b) there is no political will among the belligerents to abide by the peace accord, or c) there is a continued high level of violence, despite the signing of a peace agreement, whereby combatants may fear for their security as they become civilians.
- III. *What forms should reintegration assistance take?* To deal with the challenges posed by ex-combatants donors should focus on: a) finding ways to *substitute* the benefits of war with the benefits of peace, and b) *healing* the wounds of war.
- IV. *Finding substitutes for the benefits of war.* There are four areas in which development co-operation must find peacetime substitutes for the benefits of war. First, as combatants become civilians, their physical security must be ensured. Second, there must be legal economic opportunities for demobilised combatants so they can support themselves and their families. Third, former combatants must be able to influence decisions affecting them. It is finally important to ensure that ex-combatants do not lose the societal prestige that they gained during the conflict. Of these four, the first three are the most central to address, as it can be difficult to safeguard the prestige of ex-combatants without making reconciliation

more difficult. Points V—VII deal with these first three issues in more detail.

- V. *Ensuring the physical security of ex-combatants.* This is best done by supporting security sector reform, in particular by ensuring that the national police resume responsibility for internal security and that there is civilian and democratic control over the armed forces. It can also be wise to support limited military mergers, whereby all former warring parties have some representation in the national army. However, donor countries cannot currently use development co-operation funds for the military sector as this kind of support is not classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the OECD-DAC. Consequently, support for military mergers must come from other sources.
- VI. *Ensuring the economic security of ex-combatants.* Most ex-combatants end up in the informal sector. Former combatants may therefore need basic knowledge of market structures, accounting, and management and access to credit schemes and apprenticeships or on-the-job training. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training have proven more effective than vocational training and should therefore be prioritised. Creating employment opportunities in construction or the rehabilitation of infrastructure is also recommended.
- VII. *Ensuring the political influence of ex-combatants.* Ex-combatants should be involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of reintegration programmes. One way of doing this is to involve and support veterans' organisations. Support to veterans' organisations should, however, only be seen as a temporary solution. In the long run, it is better to encourage ex-combatants to participate in politics as normal civilians. Aid can also be given to facilitate the transformation of warring parties into political parties.

- VIII. *Healing the wounds of war.* Supporting societal reconciliation and individual trauma healing is the best way to heal the wounds of war. Donors should focus on assisting reconciliation at the community level. Initiating sensitisation campaigns and helping in the organisation of public healing ceremonies and traditional cleansing rituals can do this. It is also important that ex-combatants and receiving communities share a sense of a common future. Assistance to ex-combatants must therefore be seen as making a contribution to the whole community. Reconciliation may necessitate bringing those who have committed the most serious abuses to justice. To mitigate the war traumas of ex-combatants, development co-operation should support the ability of local communities to deal with their traumas. Promoting community-based mental health treatment services and making sure that ex-combatants have access to forums for counselling are appropriate strategies.
- IX. *Dangers of exclusively targeting ex-combatants.* Reintegration assistance that only benefits demobilised combatants should, when possible, be avoided. Such aid can create resentment from the local population, making social assimilation more difficult. Donors should therefore seek to incorporate assistance to ex-combatants into more broad-based development projects. If this is not possible, it is essential that receiving communities, at the very least, are given some assistance.
- X. *Ex-combatants — a heterogeneous group.* Demobilised combatants cannot be treated as a homogenous group. Distinctions should be made between different categories, and the needs of each group must be established for successful reintegration. For example, it does matter whether ex-combatants belonged to the government or rebel side, were members of stationary or mobile groups, and were ex-guerrillas who belonged to groups that were material- and coercion-based or identity based. The military ranks of ex-combatants are also important. It is particularly important to focus on vulnerable groups such as female ex-combat-

ants and child soldiers. These groups need separate and discrete DD&R processes, with the possibility of receiving retroactive reintegration assistance.

- XI. *Reintegration into rural or urban environments.* Reintegration is easier to achieve in rural environments. There should therefore be special incentives to lure those ex-combatants with a rural origin back to their local communities. Assistance in rural areas should focus on local reconciliation and giving ex-combatants access to land. Assistance in urban environments should focus on providing training and education. Supporting apprenticeships or on-the-job training and providing credit schemes and business training are important. Labour-intensive public works in construction and infrastructure can offer many ex-combatants in urban environments valuable employment.
- XII. *Cost-efficiency.* Implementing reintegration strategies usually means matching scarce resources with massive needs. This necessitates co-ordination between donors and local actors around a shared strategy that will ensure cost-efficiency. When planning reintegration assistance it is important to keep three things in mind: a) much reintegration work can be done in the local communities without external support, b) preference should be given to reintegration programmes that are based on proper market studies and are demand-driven, and c) programmes that address several problems simultaneously should be prioritised.
- XIII. *Contextual factors making reintegration more difficult.* When planning reintegration assistance, donors must be aware of certain contextual factors that make reintegration more difficult. These include (a) the existence of armed groups standing outside the peace process — so called spoilers — or groups fighting wars in neighbouring countries, b) access to natural resources that are easily looted — so-called spoils, c) the availability of arms in society, and d) security vacuums in weak and war-torn states.

XIV. *National ownership.* National ownership should never be equated with governmental ownership. Donors should therefore take measures to ensure that all stakeholders are included and that there are mechanisms which hinder the systematic discrimination of certain ex-combatants. Ownership should also be delegated to local communities and the ex-combatants themselves. National ownership constitutes a specific problem in extremely weak states that lack functioning state institutions and infrastructure. Under such circumstances it may be necessary for donors to take a greater responsibility in assisting in the planning, monitoring, co-ordination, and implementation of reintegration programmes.

XV. *Exit strategy.* Targeted assistance to ex-combatants should be as short-term as possible or quickly be integrated into broader development strategies. Assistance should therefore cease when ex-combatants and their families are economically, politically and socially assimilated into civil society; in other words when the households of ex-combatants are self-sufficient through production or gainful employment, they become part of the decision-making process and are accepted by their receiving communities.





# 1 Introduction

In the past 15 years, international donors have developed different programmes to deal with the challenges posed by demobilised combatants. These have usually aimed at the economic and social assimilation of ex-combatants into civilian life and have been grouped under the heading *reintegration<sup>1</sup> of ex-combatants*. Despite the growing attention given to reintegration efforts, our knowledge of the problem is still limited, especially compared to the more well-known areas of disarmament and demobilisation. To make our work more effective, it is necessary to sum up current knowledge and assess what challenges reintegration processes face in the future. The purpose of this study is therefore threefold: 1) How do we define reintegration? 2) What theoretical explanations are there for explaining when reintegration is successful? 3) Based on our theoretical knowledge and experiences from different reintegration processes, how can we make reintegration efforts more effective?

The reintegration of ex-combatants is an integral part of the demilitarisation of post-war societies. While institutions based on democratic norms and the rule of law need to replace military ones, armies must be demobilised and combatants disarmed. A proper demilitarisation is necessary to create an environment of trust and security be-

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, reintegration is defined as a societal process aiming at the economic, political, and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society. This definition is further discussed in Chapter 1.1.

tween former belligerents, which is essential for any peace process to be successful. It also allows scarce resources, needed for economic reconstruction, to be redirected from the military sector to more productive ones.

Demilitarisation, however, not only solves problems. It also generates new challenges. As national armies and guerrilla groups demobilise, large numbers of unemployed soldiers and guerrilla fighters are released into civilian life. This implies a great strain for society. First, dissatisfied former combatants often become a security threat, as they may rearm themselves or end up in different forms of crime. Second, the atrocities committed by ex-combatants may create severe tensions with civilians who have suffered at their hands. Finally, certain categories of ex-combatants, such as female ex-combatants and child soldiers, are especially vulnerable and may need particular forms of assistance for humanitarian reasons. If these challenges, especially the security threat that former combatants pose, are not taken seriously, ex-combatants may re-engage in violence, rendering post-war reconstruction and peace building impossible.

Chapter 1 continues by establishing what an ex-combatant is. This is followed by a discussion on an appropriate definition of the term reintegration and how it is related to disarmament and demobilisation in Chapters 2 and 3. There then follows a presentation of the factors that have been suggested for explaining when reintegration tends to be successful. Based on these propositions, Chapters 5—7 discuss different ways to improve the practical work with reintegration. Chapter 8 touches upon the need to take into consideration the needs of different categories of ex-combatants and the environment into which they reintegrate. The questions of national ownership and when reintegration ends and long-term development begins are probed in the two following chapters. Finally, after some concluding remarks, broad policy recommendations are made in Chapter 11.

## **1.1 Defining Ex-Combatants**

There is a surprising lack of definitions for the term ex-combatant. When dealing with disarming, demobilising

and reintegrating ex-combatants, the United Nations officially considers that fighters become ex-combatants when they are registered as disarmed (UN, 1999:52). This, however, is of little use since it says nothing about who should be recognised as a fighter or combatant. It is therefore necessary to first establish what a combatant is.

While a consensus exists of what a combatant is in interstate wars, there is no clear definition concerning intrastate wars. In international conflicts, combatants are considered to be members of national armed forces, where there exists an identifiable organisation, a clear command structure, and an internal disciplinary system. Such a definition is not always applicable in intrastate wars. Many guerrilla groups and paramilitary forces lack both a clear command structure and organisation. The international community therefore emphasises whether the individual has taken a direct part in the hostilities. To have directly taken part usually means that they have committed acts that were intended to cause harm to enemy personnel and material (Lindsey, 2001:26). One could therefore argue that an ex-combatant is an individual who has taken direct part in the hostilities on behalf of one of the warring parties and has been registered as disarmed.

However, using a definition that only takes into consideration combatants who go through the official disarmament and demobilisation channels excludes many actual fighters. First, it is common that combatants from certain armed groups are not recognised as proper combatants for political reasons. This can result in large numbers of combatants not being entitled to reintegration assistance (Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004). After the 1992 Rome Agreement in Mozambique, for example, 20,000 warriors of the armed movement *Nampama*, were excluded from the DD&R<sup>2</sup> process (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:6). Second, equating being a combat-

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<sup>2</sup> DD&R refers to the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of combatants. Disarmament is defined as the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons from combatants and civilians. Demobilisation is held as the process of disbanding armed units or at least significantly reducing the number of personnel serving in those units.

ant with handing in a weapon may exclude real fighters while including civilians who have not participated in the fighting. It is not uncommon for a group of combatants to share one weapon. Civilians who own guns, on the other hand, often pretend to be combatants in order to receive DD&R benefits (IRIN, Sept. 22 and 30, 2004). Third, it happens that some combatants are not registered because of inaccuracies in the data collection. It is estimated that 40% of the combatants in Namibia did not receive reintegration benefits because of such problems. Finally, self-demobilisation is quite common. This can take several forms. During official demobilisation, combatants who fear for their security may choose not to turn up at assembly areas. Armies and guerrilla groups may also begin to dissolve before formal demobilisation begins, due to low morale and faltering command structures. This can result in large numbers of combatants returning home, without registering themselves (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:6). A definition tied to formal processes of disarmament and demobilisation would therefore exclude these categories of combatants. This is problematic since non-official ex-combatants tend to pose a serious security threat, as they are often recruited by armed actors who have not demobilised (African Research Bulletin, Oct. 2002:15051; IRIN, Febr. 2, 2004; Reuters, Dec. 11, 2001). If donors are serious about increasing security in post-conflict societies, the goal of DD&R processes should also be to prevent combatants who fall outside the official DD&R channels from taking to arms and to lure those who do back through different incentives.

It is therefore necessary to have a definition that also includes combatants who have not been disarmed and demobilised through official channels. An *ex-combatant* can be seen as *an individual who has taken direct part in the hostilities on behalf of one of the warring parties. The individual must also either have been discharged from or have voluntarily left the military group he or she was serving in.* Such a definition also allows comparisons between different reintegration processes to be made and facilitates research on the subject.

What are the practical consequences of such a defini-

tion? First, if possible DD&R benefits should be tied to membership in one of the fighting forces. This approach is possible in armed conflicts where the parties have relatively clear command structures. In El Salvador, for example, the *Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation* (FMLN) was able to produce lists of all its members. This is the best way to ensure that benefits are given to actual ex-combatants. If such an approach is used action must, however, be taken to prevent the warring parties from inflating the number of combatants. One way of doing this is to have the armed factions verify each other's troop-size, whereby they have mutual vetoes. This method was used in the Republic of Congo (Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004; Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004). In some conflicts, such as in Sierra Leone, there were no established command structures to speak of. Although flawed, the only mechanism of registration under such circumstances may be the handing in of a gun (Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004).

Second, not equating participation in the formal DD&R process with being an ex-combatant makes retroactive DD&R initiatives possible, especially for certain categories of former combatants. Self-demobilisation need not be a negative phenomenon. It can be a sign that combatants have a social and economic structure waiting for them, whereby they prefer to return home directly, rather than staying at demobilisation centres. However, certain groups of combatants, such as women and children, seldom go to demobilisation centres since they fear for their security and the social repercussions of being considered a combatant (Coulter, Nov. 3, 2004; Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004). Retroactive DD&R processes that specifically target these groups may therefore be necessary.

## **1.2 Ex-Combatants — A Challenge for Post-Conflict Societies**

When government soldiers and rebels are demobilised, society is faced with three main challenges: ex-combatants often pose a threat to post-war societies, the atroci-

ties that ex-combatants may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts and certain groups of weak and marginalised ex-combatants may need special assistance for humanitarian reasons.

### **A Threat to Security**

It is a common phenomenon that ex-combatants rearm themselves in order to further their political demands (Alden, 2002:345; Gamba, 2003:126; Kingma, 1999:10; Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002: 447-49; Spear, 2002:146; Spencer, 1997:26). There are at least two ways in which they can do this. First, ex-combatants are often recruited by paramilitary squads or guerrilla groups that stand outside the peace process and refuse to demobilise, so-called spoilers (Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002: 447-49; Stedman, 1997). In the Republic of Congo a Ninja splinter group that had refused to demobilise and was led by Frédéric Bitsangou Ntumi attacked the suburbs of Brazzaville in 2002. During the attack, Ntumi recruited many ex-Ninjas who had been demobilised in 2000 (IRIN, Febr. 2, 2004).

A second risk is that ex-combatants recreate disbanded guerrilla groups or military units and challenge the post-war order with arms, which at worst can lead to open rebellion (Gamba, 2003:126; Kingma: 1999:10; Spear, 2002:146). In the early 1990s demobilised Contra rebels and Nicaraguan government soldiers (Sandinistas) recreated new armed groups called “Recontras” and “Recompas”. These groups not only used arms to pressure the government into giving them reintegration assistance, they also fought each other (Spencer, 1997:25-26).

A related problem is when ex-combatants lend or sell their military services to armed actors involved in wars in foreign countries. Former combatants fighting for economic compensation or for ideological persuasions have played an important role in the diffusion of several armed conflicts. Demobilised soldiers of the South African Defence Force (SADF) have fought as mercenaries in both Angola and Sierra Leone (Kingma, 1999:7) while former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA),

motivated by a pan-Albanian cause, have been directly involved in the hostilities in Macedonia (“Macedonia:...”, 2001:1, 5).

Another threat comes from former combatants joining or founding organised, criminal groups (Alden, 2002:341-42; Call & Stanley, 2003:216; Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002: 447-49). The main reason why ex-combatants so often end up in organised crime is the ease with which clandestine military structures are transformed into self-sustaining, criminal organisations (Call & Stanley, 2003:216). Once peace arrives it seems that ex-combatants often retain the contacts and structures that were used for illegal economic activities during wartime. Since the signing of the Rome Agreement in 1992 that ended the civil war in Mozambique, many of the country’s criminal gangs have been run by former officers of the national army (Alden, 2002: 350).

A related threat is the one of ex-combatants becoming involved in criminality in a wider sense, such as petty crime. This, in contrast to organised crime, is characterised by its lack of organised structure. Rather, this type of criminality comprises individuals carrying out small-scale theft and banditry (Gamba, 2003:126; Kingma, 1999:7; Spencer, 1997:62; Stedman, 2003:103-04).

### **Relations with the Rest of Society**

Former combatants, however, not only pose a challenge because of their tendency to engage in violence. Their return to civilian life may also create serious rifts in society. During hostilities, ex-combatants often commit atrocities against the civilian population. The atrocities may range from pillaging to physical abuse, rape, mutilation, kidnappings and murder. With the arrival of peace society must deal with these issues, at both national and local levels. Failure to address the need for reconciliation may result in a lack of societal peace, creating continuous tensions in society.

Sometimes, however, it is not possible to reconcile ex-combatants with their communities (Lundin, 1998:106-07). Tensions may lead to communal violence between

returning ex-combatants and the civilian population. This has been identified as one of the major obstacles to the peace process in Angola. (“Dealing with Savimbi’s Ghost...”, 2003:7-8). Under such situations it may be wiser to relocate ex-combatants to new areas (Lundin, 1998:106-07).

### **Ex-Combatants as a Weak and Marginalised Group**

After being demobilised, some categories of ex-combatants constitute a weak and marginalised group in need of economic, psychological and social assistance in order to survive. This is especially true for child soldiers, and female and disabled ex-combatants. Making sure that such assistance is given poses a major challenge to local communities and international donors.

Unemployment and the need for ex-combatants to find alternative means of supporting themselves and their families often come with demobilisation. Since ex-combatants foremost have been trained to fight, most ex-combatants lack relevant job skills. The skills that they obtained during their stay in the armed groups are seldom in demand on the job market. Furthermore, the majority has little or no formal education. This makes it difficult for ex-combatants to find employment in the short-term (*Disarmament...*, 2004:82-83; Kingma, 2000a:18; Kingma 2000b:28; Lundin, 1998:105, 108; Nübler, 2000:47, 59). The fact that demobilised combatants often acquire families and dependents during the war, adds to their strain (Collier, 1994:344).

Wartime experiences naturally also affect the health of ex-combatants. In both Uganda and Ethiopia a large portion of the demobilised combatants were HIV/AIDS positive (Kingma, 2000b:28; Kingma, 2000c:232). A more common problem is the need to care for disabled ex-combatants. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, for example, resulted in about 18,000 disabled veterans on the Ethiopian side alone. Caring for disabled ex-combatants is often a heavy burden for war-torn societies that lack sufficient resources (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:171; Collier, 1994:349). Ex-combatants also com-



monly suffer from psychological stress due to war trauma. As combatants they may have carried out, suffered from, or witnessed terrible violence that left deep psychological scars which must be dealt with (Kingma, 1999:8; Preston, 1997:469). Because of the stress associated with participating in fighting, many combatants begin using alcohol and drugs. Once peace arrives, it is estimated that as many as 25%-30% of all combatants are serious drug abusers (Mueller, 2003:509).

It is the existence of these three challenges that is the rationale for giving targeted reintegration assistance to ex-combatants. In their absence former combatants can be treated as ordinary civilians. Reintegration assistance is therefore only warranted if demobilised combatants pose a security threat to the new peace order; if the atrocities that they may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts in society; or if certain categories of ex-combatants cannot support themselves owing to economic, political, or social marginalisation.

# 2 Defining Reintegration

Originally reintegration<sup>3</sup> mainly referred to programmes dealing with the economic assimilation of demobilised combatants — especially through vocational training and job creation schemes — and aimed at hindering disgruntled ex-combatants from undermining the consolidation of peace. However, over time, more emphasis has been placed on the social aspects of reintegration. Many argue that it is not enough to hinder ex-combatants from engaging in violence. It is just as important to make them part of local civil society, which, among other things, necessitates efforts at reconciliation (Lundin, 1998:104-06). The need to facilitate the social reintegration of ex-combatants has resulted in other groups receiving reintegration assistance. The main reason has been to avoid tensions between ex-combatants and other weak groups in society, who may resent ex-combatants receiving special treatment. This development has resulted in a widening of the concept reintegration, blurring the meaning of the term. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves what we mean by reintegration. Where do we stand today and how can we make the concept clearer?

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that using the term reintegration is misleading in some societies where combatants have fought their whole lives and have nothing to “re”integrate into. In other cases, ex-combatants do not wish to go back to their old lives, since joining the war was seen as a way out of their life situations at the time. This must, however, be contrasted with those post-conflict societies where combatants retain contact with their families and communities throughout the conflict. In such situations there is a structure to be “re”integrated into.

One way of tackling this problem is to look at different definitions. For this purpose it is fruitful to distinguish between practical and more theoretical definitions of reintegration, practical definitions being those used by nongovernmental (NGOs), national and international organizations, and theoretical definitions being those used in the academic literature. These two categories of definitions can be analysed by posing three questions: 1) Who is included in the target group? 2) What is the aim of reintegration? 3) What methods are prescribed?<sup>4</sup>

Most practical definitions<sup>5</sup> name both ex-combatants and their families as the group to be reintegrated while some also include other war-affected groups, such as disabled individuals, who are not ex-combatants. The aim of reintegration is almost always the economic and social assimilation into civilian life. Finally, most definitions also say something about what method should be used to assimilate different groups of individuals economically and socially. They typically specify various programmes and projects that need to be organised for reintegration to be successful.

Theoretical definitions<sup>6</sup>, on the other hand, mostly talk about ex-combatants and their families as the target group and more seldom about other vulnerable groups in society. The main goal of reintegration is also the economic and social assimilation into civilian life. As for how to achieve this, theoretical definitions — in contrast to practical — tend to leave the method of reintegration more open.

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<sup>4</sup> The differences between practical and theoretical definitions are not always clear. The two sometimes overlap. It can, however, be fruitful to make this distinction for analytical purposes.

<sup>5</sup> These definitions have been taken from consultants working on reintegration, the Swedish National Defence College, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the World Bank. Öhman, 2002:3; Disarmament..., 2004:65; Strategic..., 2004:8-9; UN, 1999:15; WB, 2001:5, 50.

<sup>6</sup> These definitions were taken from Berdal (1996:39); Colleta, Kostner & Wiederhofer (2004:170); Kingma (2000b:28); Lundin (1998:105); Nübler (2000:46-47); and Özerdem (2002:962).

**Figure 1: Differences between Practical and More Theoretical Definitions of Reintegration**

	Practical definitions	Theoretical definitions
Target group	Ex-combatants, their families, and other war-affected groups	Ex-combatants and their families
Aim	Economic and social assimilation	Economic and social assimilation
Method	Programmes and projects	–

Two main differences can be observed. First, practical definitions more often include other war-affected groups than just ex-combatants and their families. Second, while practical definitions tend to specifically mention programmes and projects, theoretical definitions leave the question of method open. Both categories of definitions tend to see the ultimate goal of the reintegration process as the economic and social assimilation of the target group into the civilian community.

It is understandable that donor agencies stress programmes and projects as the method for reintegrating war-affected groups, since it is through these that their assistance is channelled. There are, however, risks with equating reintegration support programmes with the reintegration process. The process of reintegration is much more than the programmes that are financed, planned, and implemented by foreign NGOs and donor agencies. The ex-combatants themselves, their families and local communities carry the heaviest burden in reintegration (*Disarmament...*, 2004:65; Kingma, 2000b:29). In many post-war societies there is no or very limited outside support for the reintegration process. In these societies ex-combatants, their families and the local communities are usually left to handle these issues as best as they can. Failing to realise that most reintegration work occurs

outside of donor sponsored programmes may result in a situation where the programmes do not support the local reintegration process (Kingma, 2000b:29). The donor programmes and the local reintegration process may even have different objectives, which at worst can create tensions. In Mozambique international donors have regarded the reintegration process as a success since ex-combatants did not undermine the country's post-war security. Many local community leaders, however, are of another opinion. They mean that there is a lack of social peace within the community, since the ex-combatants are still not socially assimilated (Alden, 2002:350-51).

The second question concerns the identity of the target group. Is it ex-combatants, their families, other vulnerable groups in society, or some or all of the preceding? Most people would agree that it is necessary to include the families of the former combatants as a target group, since their lives are so intimately connected with those of the ex-combatants. Two main reasons are given as to why other war-affected groups — such as internally displaced people; refugees; receiving communities; and individuals who were connected with the armed factions but did not participate in actual fighting — such as messengers, cooks, and girls used as sex slaves — should also be included. First, if there is a feeling that ex-combatants are given special treatment, tensions might arise within the community. Second, other war-affected groups must also receive assistance to survive. Although true, but it is questionable if these are reasons to include them in a definition mainly concerned with the reintegration of ex-combatants. Different groups of war-affected individuals have different needs and pose different problems. By including several target groups in the same definition, it becomes unclear which factors are the most central to address when working with each category. The result may be policies that prescribe the same sort of assistance to all target groups, even if such a policy in reality has no effect or may even be counterproductive to a specific group. The reintegration of all groups then becomes less effective. In Sierra Leone, for example, women who had been forced

to marry members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), of which only some had participated in fighting, were expected to go to the same demobilisation centres as their former captors. Fearing for their security, most stayed away and received no assistance (Coulter, Nov. 3, 2004). The experiences from Sierra Leone underline the need to make a clearer distinction between different categories of war-affected groups. This also entails creating demobilisation and reintegration programmes that have been tailored to the needs of these groups (Coulter, Nov. 3, 2004).

There are certainly situations where the needs of ex-combatants and other war-affected groups must be considered together to avoid societal tension. It may, for example, be necessary to give assistance to receiving communities. Such assistance is, however, foremost given to make the reintegration of ex-combatants more effective. The main target group is therefore still ex-combatants.

## **2.1 An Alternative Definition**

Both practical and more theoretical definitions tend to state economic and social assimilation as the goal of reintegration. This view of what reintegration is about is, however, too narrow. There is also a need to acknowledge the importance of the political assimilation of ex-combatants. The traditional view has been to only see the period leading up to the signing of a peace accord as a political process, where the peace agreement itself is seen as a way of regulating the political conflict between the belligerents. The peace implementation phase, in contrast, has often been considered more technical, just being a question of implementing what has been agreed upon (Stedman, 2002:1-2). This has been especially true concerning the reintegration phase. Reintegration processes have per definition been viewed as technical matters, since they are most often equated with reintegration programmes.

Failing to realise that reintegration processes also have political dimensions can have severe consequences. It is not uncommon that ex-combatants belonging to certain warring factions are excluded from receiving or given less

reintegration assistance than other groups. One group that is often discriminated against is former guerrilla fighters, probably because they tend to have less political influence over national policies. One example is the reintegration process in Mozambique where demobilised guerrilla fighters from the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) have been neglected. The main reason is that the country's veterans' organisation AMODEG, which has close ties with the state, has mainly represented the interests of former government soldiers (Schafer, 1998). Some academics and donor agencies are beginning to speak of political assimilation, but this is still a marginal phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

To sum up, a fruitful definition of reintegration should contain three aspects. First the target group should be ex-combatants and their families. Second, the aim of the reintegration process should be their economic, political and social assimilation into civil society. Finally, the method should be broad enough to include forms of reintegration efforts other than programmes and projects organised by international donors. The following definition is proposed:

*Reintegration is seen as a societal process aiming at the economic, political, and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society.*

The process by which the households of ex-combatants build up their livelihoods can be seen as economic assimilation. This should primarily be done through production or other forms of gainful employment to ensure self-sufficiency. Political assimilation is the manner in which ex-combatants and their families become part of decision-making processes. Social assimilation can be seen as the receiving communities' acceptance of the ex-combatants and their families. Here it is important to consider the attitudes of the ex-combatants, of their families and of the communities (Kingma, 2000b:28). By focusing on

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Disarmament..., (2004:92) and Kingma, (2000b:28).

economic, political and social assimilation, it will be possible to deal with the three main challenges that ex-combatants pose to post-war societies: the security threat they constitute, the atrocities that ex-combatants may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts and certain groups of ex-combatants may need special assistance for humanitarian reasons.

The past couple of years have witnessed a proliferation of concepts such as repatriation/resettlement; reinsertion; rehabilitation; and a narrower definition of reintegration that seeks to replace the traditional, broader concept of reintegration.<sup>8</sup> It is, however, questionable whether this development is desirable. First, the proliferation of R's only increases the already existing confusion and vagueness of what we mean by DD&R. Second, while the phases of demobilisation and reintegration are difficult to demarcate practically and theoretically, the phases of demobilisation, repatriation/resettlement, reinsertion, rehabilitation and reintegration are even more so. Finally, all the new R's have the same ultimate goal as the traditional definition of reintegration, namely for ex-combatants and their families to become normal functioning members of civil society. There are therefore no obvious gains to be had by subdividing the concept of reintegration into several new phases.

To conclude what has been said so far, if one or more of the three challenges that ex-combatants pose — if they constitute a security threat, whether there are societal tensions between them and the civilian population and if certain categories of ex-combatants cannot fend for themselves — are present reintegration assistance should be given. The goal of this assistance should be to ensure that

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<sup>8</sup> When these terms are employed, reintegration is only seen as the very last phase of the assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society, namely the return to a normal functioning society (WB, 2001:5). Repatriation/resettlement is defined as the return of ex-combatants to their preferred location of living, in the case of repatriation back to their country of origin (Kingma, 2000b:26; Merriam-Webster OnLine). The giving of immediate support to ex-combatants so that they will survive the period between demobilisation and long-term reintegration is seen as reinsertion (WB, 2001:5). Rehabilitation is seldom clearly defined but seems to refer to the restoration of ex-combatants to good health through medical treatment, therapy, or education.



ex-combatants and their families are fully reintegrated into society; in other words, that they are economically, politically, and socially assimilated. It is important to have a holistic view of reintegration that includes all three aspects, since it is unlikely that one form of assimilation can be achieved without the others. The next question that must be posed is what forms reintegration assistance should take to achieve full reintegration? This question will be addressed in chapters 5—6. It is, however, first necessary to understand how reintegration is related to the broader concept of DD&R and to establish what theories there are that explain when reintegration tends to be successful.

# 3 Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration

The reintegration of ex-combatants is an integral part of what is commonly known as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. Disarmament is usually defined as the collection, control, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons from combatants and sometimes civilians (*Disarmament...*, 2004:29 ; UN, 1999:15; Özerdem, 2002:962). The importance of disarmament lies in the need to reduce the number of weapons in society — especially the number of illegal arms — to create a safer environment. Since the relinquishment of weapons may be a traumatic experience for combatants, the disarmament process can also be seen as a confidence-building exercise (Hitchcock, 2004:37). Demobilisation is commonly defined as the process of disbanding armed units or at least significantly reducing the number of personnel serving in those units (Berdahl, 1996:39; *Disarmament...*, 2004: 15; Hitchcock, 2004:37; Kingma, 2000b:26). Demobilisation is essential since it aims to ensure that the state regains its monopoly on violence by disbanding guerrilla groups and paramilitary forces. Guerrilla groups usually condition their disbanding on a reduction in the number of government forces and other forms of military reforms to ensure that their members will not be attacked once they have dissolved. The main aim of DD&R processes can thereby be described as one of restoring security. The restoration of security, in return, allows for the economic reconstruction

and reconciliation of war-torn societies and for the redistribution of sparse resources from the military sector to more productive areas (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhoer, 2004:170).

It has been argued that four main factors are essential for a DD&R process to be successful. First, there must be a strong political will by the warring parties to abide by the peace agreement. Second, security arrangements that regulate the violence between the warring parties must be developed. This helps to create a sense of trust between the belligerents, something which is extremely important because the warring parties often feel vulnerable and insecure when they begin handing in their weapons and disbanding their military units. Third, the DD&R process should be addressed as early as possible in the peace negotiations to increase the transparency of the process. Finally, it is important that all stakeholders are involved in the DD&R process (WB, 2001:14; Hitchcock, 2004:37).

### **3.1 Two Views of DD&R**

The traditional view of the DD&R process is that it is a linear process with three distinct phases: disarmament followed by demobilisation and reintegration (Özerdem, 2002:963). As combatants of different factions gather at assembly areas, their weapons are confiscated and either stored for the national army or destroyed, so-called disarmament. Disarmament is followed by demobilisation. This phase can be seen as an interim period of a few months, spent in the assembly areas, to prepare the combatants for civilian life. Demobilisation usually includes registration of combatants, which entitles them to certain benefits. This is often followed by health screening and a survey process that seeks to identify the needs and preferences of ex-combatants concerning education, employment, and where they want to settle. When leaving the assembly areas, combatants are officially discharged from the military units they served in and their reintegration into civilian life begins. The reintegration process consists in part of different economic and social programmes aimed at assisting their assimilation into society (Colletta,

Kostner & Wiederhoefer, 2004:170; WB, 2001:15; Hitchcock, 2004:37).

In many cases, however, it is not possible to make a clear distinction between the three phases. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration efforts are often carried out in parallel with each other. For example, combatants are usually required to hand in a weapon in order to receive reintegration benefits. Despite this, large numbers of weapons are often never collected. The armed factions, or the combatants themselves, may choose to hide weapons in case the peace processes falters. Another problem is that civilians tend to arm themselves during war. In many instances it is therefore desirable to have continuous disarmament also during the reintegration phase.

It may also be necessary to launch demobilisation exercises during the reintegration phase. After a peace agreement has been signed there are often spoilers who continue fighting. If spoiler groups later choose to join the peace process, there needs to be several parallel DD&R processes that are at different stages. If the original signatories of the agreement have already been demobilised and their members are being reintegrated into society, a new demobilisation must be initiated for the new-comers.

A reintegration process can be launched even though there has been no formal disarmament and demobilisation. This is sometimes used in civil wars where no peace agreement has been signed. The aim is to lure individual fighters and commanders to desert by offering amnesty, reintegration benefits, or other incentives. Such reintegration processes tend to be launched by national governments that are unwilling to find a negotiated settlement with guerrilla groups. This has, for example, been done by the Russian government in Chechnya, by the Turkish in Kurdistan and by Algeria in its conflict with Islamist guerrillas (“The Civil Concord...”, 2001:5-7; *Dagens Nyheter*, June 6 and Aug. 10, 2003). Similar initiatives have been launched in countries where it has been deemed impossible to find an all-encompassing accord that would be supported by all warring parties. This occurred in Afghanistan, where different warlords have been reluctant

to disarm and demobilise their private armies (“Disarmament and Reintegration...”, 2003:i).

Launching a reintegration process without first finding a political solution should, however, be avoided. Without a political solution, the root causes of the conflict persist, thus making it difficult to persuade individual fighters to desert. Furthermore, without a secure environment combatants seldom leave their military units, even though they might wish to. With no proper peace agreement regulating the conflict behaviour of the parties, individual fighters have few guarantees that they will not be persecuted by the authorities. The situation is further complicated by the fact that guerrillas sometimes target former comrades who have laid down their arms (AFP, Nov. 11, 2003 and March 11, 2004).

### **3.2 The Interdependence of DD&R**

The processes of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration are highly interdependent. None can be carried out in isolation from the other, something which is important to keep in mind when planning and implementing a DD&R process. Often more emphasis is placed on disarmament and demobilisation, while the question of reintegration is left open. This not only negatively affects reintegration, but also makes disarmament and demobilisation more difficult. One of the factors influencing whether combatants and commanders choose to disarm and demobilise is what kind of life awaits them as civilians. Reintegration benefits are important incentives that can be used to encourage demobilisation and disarmament. It is therefore essential that a clear plan for the reintegration of ex-combatants is formed prior to the launching of disarmament and demobilisation (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:171; UN, 1999:5; *Liberian...*, 2003:10; Spencer, 1997:61, 64-65).

The degree to which disarmament and demobilisation are successful also affects the reintegration process. If the disarmament of combatants, society, and even neighbouring countries is flawed, the likelihood that ex-combatants will engage in different forms of violence is higher.

If weapons are easily acquired, it may be tempting for disgruntled ex-combatants to fall back on the use of force (Call & Stanley, 2003:216; Gamba 2003:126; Özerdem, 2002:973).

It is, however, the demobilisation phase that has the greatest effect on the successful reintegration of ex-combatants. First, problems arise if there are spoiler groups that do not demobilise. This creates a security environment that is unfavourable for reintegration. As long as armed conflict continues, demobilised combatants may be forced or lured to remobilise. Second, the time combatants spend in assembly areas is an important opportunity to prepare them for civilian life (Spencer, 1997:61). Counselling is a good way of identifying the needs of ex-combatants and of briefing them on their rights and responsibilities. Proper counselling facilitates the planning of different educational activities or the participation of ex-combatants in different job-creation programmes after leaving the assembly areas. At times different forms of education may even be given during the demobilisation phase.

# 4 Reintegration: A Theoryless Field

Under what circumstances does the reintegration of ex-combatants tend to be successful? At present, there are no theories that can help us answer this question. There are instead statements and assumptions about what is believed to be conducive to successful reintegration. These assumptions are mentioned in case studies or articles that in a descriptive manner explain the problem in general terms. None of these, however, have any theory-generating ambitions. They only present lessons learned which can be used for future reintegration work, or give more or less precise statements about what can prevent ex-combatants from using violence. The studies also lack well-defined and stringent methodologies from which the lessons learned and statements have been derived.<sup>9</sup>

The lack of theory in this area is explained by the fact that the reintegration of ex-combatants has so far mostly caught the interest of policymakers and practitioners. It is only in recent years that academics have shown an interest in the problem. The growing academic attention has, however, mostly focused on the security aspect of the problem, in other words how to prevent ex-combatants from engaging in different forms of violence.

In the literature it is possible to identify three issues that are considered important when seeking to hinder demobi-

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<sup>9</sup> An exception is Collier (1994) who uses a stringent methodology to investigate the relationship between ex-combatants' access to land and the increase in crime. The study does, however, not have any theoretical ambitions.

lised combatants from undermining the security of post-conflict societies: finding peacetime *substitutes* for the benefits of war, *healing* the wounds of war, and dealing with *contextual factors* that make reintegration more difficult. While the first two are directly related to the life situations of ex-combatants, the third deals with external factors that make it easier for ex-combatants who wish to challenge the post-war order with arms to do so. Although these issues are not based on scientific research, they are still of interest. First, because they are founded on actual experiences of trying to reintegrate ex-combatants, and, second, because they can be used for theory building. Even though these issues primarily concern how to prevent former combatants from engaging in violence, they are also likely to affect the social, political and economic assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society.

To understand how these three issues may influence the decisions of ex-combatants to re-engage in violence, it is necessary to understand what it is like to be a combatant and how the lives of combatants change with demobilisation. In war, being a fighter has both positive and negative aspects. If both these aspects are not taken into consideration, reintegration will be more difficult.

### **Life as a Combatant and as an Ex-Combatant**

War is often described as the collapse or breakdown of normal politics, resulting in anarchy, destruction and a halt in economic development. Even though war has severe negative consequences for most sections of society, there are those who gain from it. This is true, for example, concerning the creation of illegal wartime economies based on unlawful taxation, pillaging, and smuggling involving government officials, guerrilla groups, combatants and local and international traders. For these groups of individuals war is not so much a breakdown of a political system as the creation of an alternative and highly beneficial system (Berdal & Malone, 2000:5-6; Keen, 2000a:19-22; Keen, 2000b:23-24, 29; Lyons, 2004:269).

For ordinary people, violence may also be beneficial and seen as a solution to their problems rather than a



problem. In many countries there are few possibilities for social advancement due to widespread corruption, lack of jobs and educational opportunities. In such societies war can be an alternative route to empowerment, especially for marginalized groups such as male youths. In Algeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone large portions of those who joined the guerrilla groups were young men who lacked any prospect of social advancement (Utas, 2003:9, 15-16, 231; Abdullah, 2002:20, 34; Keen, 2000b:25, 29; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:20; Martinez, 2000:10-11, 13, 78, 82). There are four main ways in which being a combatant can be empowering: it enhances one's own security, it gives economic and political benefits and it gives societal prestige.

Being a combatant naturally also has drawbacks. These concern foremost the social and psychological effects of participating in warfare. Soldiers and guerrillas who engage in severe violence against the civilian population may become tainted socially. This can have serious repercussions once peace arrives. Another negative effect is the trauma involved with engaging in violence. Combatants often carry out, suffer from, or witness horrific violence. Being exposed to such violence often leads to severe psychological trauma.

With demobilisation, ex-combatants risk losing the empowerment gained during the fighting. Because most demobilised combatants lack higher education and job skills and may not be welcome in their home communities, they are easily marginalised in society (Utas, 2003: 250). This is especially true for former combatants suffering from grave psychological distress. After demobilisation, it is therefore necessary to do two things. First, it is imperative to find peaceful substitutes for their loss of economic, political, and social empowerment and the possibility to fend for their own security. Second, it is essential that there is societal and individual healing.

The failure to find peaceful substitutes and address aspects of healing in the post-demobilisation phase can give ex-combatants the incentive to engage in different forms of violence. These incentives are further strengthened by

the high expectations ex-combatants have of the civilian life awaiting them. During the struggle, leaders often promise their subordinates access to education, work, and land. When peace arrives, ex-combatants expect to receive the benefits they were promised or that they will be taken care of because of the sacrifices made during the armed conflict. These promises and expectations are, however, seldom met, which tends to create a sense of bitterness among ex-combatants. That such grievances often result in collective action, is probably due to the strong bonds of loyalty and friendship that exist between ex-combatants who have served in the same military units (*Disarmament...*, 2004:71, 74; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:18, 23, 25; Preston, 1997:457, 463). Such networks can easily be used to make collective demands.

Finding peaceful substitutes for the benefits of war and working with healing may, however, not be enough to hinder ex-combatants from re-engaging in violence. It is also imperative to deal with certain contextual factors outside the reintegration process that enable disgruntled ex-combatants who wish to take up arms, to do so. These include the continued existence of arms and armed groups, natural resources that are easy to loot, and the amount of control that the central government has over its own territory.

In the following the issues of peacetime substitutes, healing and contextual factors that make reintegration more difficult will be discussed separately in more detail. The discussion will focus foremost on how it is possible to address these issues practically. The magnitude of the contextual factors means that they are best dealt with outside the mandate of most DD&R processes, except disarmament. Donors and practitioners should therefore focus mainly on the issues of finding substitutes for the benefits of war and healing. If these issues are dealt with, the contextual factors will also be addressed indirectly because they will appear less tempting for ex-combatants.

# 5 Finding Peacetime Substitutes for the Benefits of War

To prevent ex-combatants from becoming marginalised in post-conflict societies, it is necessary to find substitutes for the loss of empowerment that demobilisation entails. It is important to underline that these substitutes should never be seen as rewards, since this can be conceived as offensive by civilians who may have suffered at the hands of ex-combatants. They should instead be seen as mechanisms that ease the transformation of combatants' into civilians and are therefore necessary to attain peace and development. However, since giving these substitutes may be controversial, it should be done in conjunction with efforts at reconciliation. There are four main forms of substitutes.<sup>10</sup> First, when handing in their weapons, ex-combatants lose the ability to fend for their own security, whereby it is imperative to find ways to ensure their physical security. Second, the economic survival of ex-combatants and their families' must be ensured. Third, there needs to be mechanisms that allow ex-combatants to channel their political demands peacefully. Finally, it is important to find ways to safeguard the societal prestige of ex-combatants.

## 5.1 The Physical Security of Ex-Combatants

In civil wars the majority of victims are civilians. As a civilian it may be safer to join an armed group than stand-

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<sup>10</sup> The factors concerning substitutes have been derived from the literature on DD&R.

ing outside one. Recruitment can therefore be a good way of protecting oneself and one's family from murder, pillage, forced transfer and other forms of harassment (Keen, 2000b: 23, 25, 31; Utas 2003: 16).

Once demobilised, however, former guerrillas and soldiers lose the ability to fend for their own and their families' security. It is therefore argued that it is essential to ensure the physical security of ex-combatants when they return to civilian life. If this is not done, it will not only be difficult to persuade combatants to disarm, there is also a high probability that already disarmed and demobilised combatants will rearm themselves. (Berdal, 1996:17-18; Call & Stanley, 2003:212-13, 216, 218; Stedman, 2003:110).

### **Practical Work with the Physical Security of Ex-Combatants**

The most insecure period for ex-combatants is when they are discharged from their military units and return to civilian life. This is especially true for former guerrillas. Having handed in their guns, they are vulnerable to harassment from military and police forces and vengeful civilians. An obvious way to alleviate such fears is to incorporate guerrilla groups, or parts of them, into the national armed forces. Power sharing within the military and the police can be a good way for the warring parties to ensure that they will not be exposed to surprise attacks. Such arrangements are also beneficial for those ex-combatants who are not incorporated, as it increases the transparency of and their confidence in the security forces. Military mergers have successfully prevented reoccurrence of war in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Call & Stanley, 2003:212-15, 219-20).

Mergers can, however, be problematic. First, it may be difficult to create a unified national army through a military merger. This is especially true if the military structures of the merging parties are left intact. The result can be that old warlords retain their influence, whereby armies are only national on paper. Such a development can be seen in Afghanistan, where armed groups have been formally incorporated into the army, without relinquish-

ing any control of their local command structure (*Dagens Nyheter*, Oct. 8, 2004). Second, it is not uncommon that guerrilla groups and government forces are not sufficiently downsized prior to their merger, creating oversized new armies. This is sometimes necessary in the short-term, especially in situations where the mistrust between former belligerents is too high. In Cambodia, for example, the armed forces swelled during the 1990s due to military mergers. It was not until 2001, when the political situation had stabilised, that the government began demobilising the armed forces (“Cambodia...”, 2000:20-22; *Keesing’s...*, Oct. 2001:44403; *Regional Surveys...*, 2004: 139-42). At times, it can also be wise to delay demobilising over-sized armies until the economic situation is more conducive to absorbing ex-combatants. Such a delay facilitated the re-integration of ex-combatants in Uganda. In the long-term, however, it is not possible for war-torn countries to support oversized armies. Having over dimensioned armed forces may even constitute a security hazard. In Chad and Guinea-Bissau, countries that have been unable or unwilling to carry out any larger demobilisation, unpaid soldiers have been involved in violence against the state (IRIN, May 19 and Oct. 7, 2004; Kingma, 2000c:222).

Another way of improving the security of returning ex-combatants, as well as for all of society, is supporting so-called security sector reform. This usually entails the reformation of the security forces, intelligence services, judicial and penal institutions, and civil authorities in charge of control and oversight of the security apparatus (OECD, 2004:7). Of these, military and police reform is the most crucial when addressing the problems of re-integration. In armed conflicts, the national army often takes control over internal security. The armed forces are usually unfit for such a task, as they tend to use overwhelming force and are not educated for normal policing tasks. Once the hostilities have ended, it is therefore essential that the national police resume responsibility for internal security. The police, however, often need to be educated in the respect of human rights, fair conduct, impartiality, and the moderate use of force. A corrupt

and abusive police force can soon destroy society's trust for the post-war order (Call & Stanley, 2003:213, 216-17, 219; *Disarmament...*, 2004:68). Military reforms must also lead to increased civilian and democratic control over the national forces (Kingma, 1999:4-5). This is a way to guarantee that the military does not engage in politics or become involved in human rights abuses and the harassment of civilians, including ex-combatants.

Giving amnesty can also be a way of ensuring the security of ex-combatants. It can be an effective way to hinder them from being harassed or persecuted after demobilisation. Refusing combatants amnesty can furthermore make it more difficult to bring an end to the hostilities (Wallenstein, 2002:11). Consideration must, however, be given to the need to bring those who have committed serious abuses to justice, as a general amnesty may make reconciliation difficult. Donors should be aware of the inherent contradiction between the need to grant amnesty in order to end the fighting and the more long-term need for justice. This dilemma is not easily resolved, something which can be seen in Columbia. International pressure has made it difficult for the government to grant amnesty to members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Columbia (AUC), making the group hesitant to demobilise (*The Economist*, Dec. 4, 2004).

If suspicions between warring parties are too high, it is possible to relinquish the responsibility of security to third parties, such as the UN. The presence of neutral troops may create a more conducive environment for reintegration, as former guerrillas are not dependent on their former rivals for security. International observers are frequently used to verify compliance during demobilisation (Walter, 1999:46). Neutral observers could also be used during the reintegration phase to ensure that returning ex-combatants are not harassed.

*Focus for development co-operation:* Supporting security sector reform is essential, especially to ensure that the national police resumes responsibility for internal security and that there is civilian and democratic control over the armed forces. It can also be wise to support a limited military merger, whereby all former warring parties

have some representation in the national army. However, donor countries can currently not use development co-operation funds for the military sector since this kind of support is not classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the OECD-DAC. Consequently, support for military mergers must come from other sources.

## **5.2 The Economic Security of Ex-Combatants**

One of the main benefits of participating in war is the opportunity for economic gain. Some authors argue that the central aim of rebellion is economic profit, especially through the illegal taxation of natural resources for export (Collier 2000:839, 852). Even though other factors may explain the outbreak of violence, economic considerations may become more important with time. In some civil wars, an economic interest in continuing the war at a profitable level may replace defeating the enemy as the main objective (Berdal and Malone, 2000:2, 6). Taking part in war can also be profitable for the individual. Being a combatant ensures a certain income either in the form of a salary or from looting. The use of violence may also be a way to gain access to land, water and mineral resources by forcing original owners away (Berdal, 1996:16-17; Keen, 2000b:23-25, 29-31).

According to a majority of scholars, ensuring the economic security of ex-combatants is the most decisive factor in the post-demobilisation phase. If former soldiers and guerrilla fighters lack means of securing their economic survival as civilians, there is a high probability that they will take up arms again (Özerdem, 2002:962). The best way of doing this is to provide ex-combatants with meaningful occupations whereby they can support themselves and their families (Berdal, 1996:18; Call & Stanley, 2003:215-16; Gamba, 2003:126, 133; Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002:456-57; Spear, 2002:150; Özerdem, 2002:969-71).

### **Practical Work with the Economic Security of Ex-Combatants**

Efforts to enable ex-combatants and their families to support themselves can be divided into three phases. The first

phase aims at securing their immediate survival until they can provide for themselves. This is followed by an intermediate period that seeks to give ex-combatants the skills, knowledge and information to enable them to support themselves. The final stage is achieving economic self-sufficiency through production or gainful employment.

Lacking income and employment, ex-combatants and their dependents are often unable to support themselves after demobilisation. This necessitates the creation of so-called reinsertion packages that can help them overcome the difficult period between demobilisation and full economic assimilation into civil society. Reinsertion packages can include anything from cash payments, clothing, food, medicine, tools, and cooking utensils to housing, building materials, seeds, and animals. Two aspects must be kept in mind when deciding the content of the packages. It is imperative that the contents are standardised in some way. Failure to do so may lead to tensions and violence by disgruntled ex-combatants (*Strategic...*, 2004:17). There must at the same time be enough flexibility to allow for the contents to vary depending on the area of reintegration — whether it is into an urban or rural environment (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhoefer, 2004:174-75).

After the immediate survival of ex-combatants is ensured, it is necessary to find ways to give them the skills, knowledge, and information that allows them to support themselves in a sustainable manner. Most demobilised combatants lack sufficient education and skills to compete on the labour market. Assistance can therefore be given to ex-combatants wishing to complete their primary or secondary education. In some situations, support can also be given to persons seeking a higher education. Any formal education should be preceded by a market study, assessing whether such education will contribute to employment. It is also wise to make an assessment of the motivation and capacities of the ex-combatant in question (*Liberian...*, 2003:55; WB, 2001:56). Access to education and training is especially important in countries with advanced economies, where the discrepancy between the skills that ex-com-



batants possess and the skills that are in demand on the labour market is the greatest (Spear, 2002:145).

Even though formal education can at times be motivated, it is usually more fruitful to provide access to more practical, hands-on training. Such skills are more useful in the informal sector where most ex-combatants end up. Vocational training has traditionally been seen as the best way for ex-combatants to acquire skills in areas such as plumbing, masonry, carpentry, electrical work, and small-scale cottage industry. Vocational training programmes have, however, had meagre results in many countries. In El Salvador, only an estimated 25% of those who received vocational training actually found employment in their area of specialty. More and more practitioners are instead arguing that apprenticeships and on-the-job training are preferable, since it is easier for those who lack education to acquire skills (*Strategic...*, 2004:28). In Angola apprenticeships were more effective than vocational training, because skills and income were acquired more quickly (Verhey, 2002:4). Apprenticeships and on-the-job training have an additional advantage. They give ex-combatants contacts and a valuable reference that can be used when seeking new employment. They also allow ex-combatants to increase their networking skills. Whether training is vocational or done via apprenticeships, it must be based on proper labour market studies and be demand driven. Such studies have often been lacking in many reintegration efforts sponsored by donors (Nübler, 2000:62; Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004).

Donors have often used education and training programmes as a way to “buy” time for peace processes. By keeping ex-combatants busy, it is possible to hinder them from engaging in activities that might undermine the peace process, until a more stable security environment is created. The need to buy time was an overarching aim of training programmes in both Kosovo and Mozambique (Alden, 2002:349-50; *Disarmament...*, 2004:84; Özerdem, 2002:961). Putting too much emphasis on keeping ex-combatants busy can, however, backfire in the long run. Allowing demobilised combatants to engage in training

increases their hopes of a brighter future. If they fail to find employment after training, they may become more dissatisfied than they were at the time of demobilisation, increasing the risk for violence (Alden, 2002:349-50; Özerdem, 2002:961).

It is seldom enough for former combatants to acquire skills and knowledge through training and education. Ex-combatants tend to lack job-seeking skills and have trouble finding information on available jobs. It is therefore wise to provide ex-combatants with counselling services that can assist them in finding employment, taking initiatives, and making their preferences more realistic (Nübler, 2000:58-59).

When entering the labour market the majority of ex-combatants end up in the informal sector where they become self-employed. The insecure investment climate in post-conflict societies in conjunction with the lack of education and skills of ex-combatants makes it difficult for them to find work in the formal sector (Nübler, 2000:59, 60, 64). Self-employment in small and micro enterprises has proven important in giving ex-combatants an income<sup>11</sup> in a short period of time. This requires that ex-combatants receive basic knowledge of market structures, accounting, management, and practical skills through vocational training or apprenticeships (*Disarmament...*, 2004:82-85; Nübler, 2000:59). Former combatants, however, almost always lack the necessary capital to get started and have bleak prospects of securing loans from private banks. Donors and government agencies must therefore assist in giving ex-combatants access to favourable credit schemes (UN, 1999:81). Great effort must be made to conduct surveys that identify promising business opportunities. This has been neglected in many reintegration processes and resulted in ex-combatants engaging in markets with little economic potential (Nübler, 2000:59). When evaluating credit schemes as well as programmes that offer education and training, it is important to keep

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<sup>11</sup> One of the best ways to provide a steady income for ex-combatants in the informal sector is to give them access to land, especially in rural environments (see also Chapter 8.5).

in mind that ex-combatants tend to have fewer skills and less motivation than the normal civilian population. It may therefore be appropriate to have lower expectations of ex-combatants concerning efficiency than other categories of individuals (Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004).

Even though most ex-combatants end up in the informal sector, there are still initiatives that can be made in the formal sector. Donors and national governments can create employment opportunities in private companies by paying the salaries of ex-combatants (*Disarmament...*, 2004:65-66). This is a fruitful way to give former combatants a valuable reference that they can use in their search for future employment. One potential problem is that the enterprises that are most willing to hire former soldiers and guerrillas tend to be private security companies. Demand for such services in post-war societies racked by continuous insecurity has been great. The mushrooming of private security companies employing ex-combatants has been observed in Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia and Uganda (Kingma, 2000c:230; Preston, 1997:469; Sawyer, 2004:448). The United Nation's Department of Peacekeeping Operations even sees this as one way for ex-combatants to receive gainful employment (UN, 1999:83). One should, however, be wary of supporting the employment of former combatants in security companies since these companies often operate in the grey zone between legal and illegal economic activities (Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002).

A limited number of ex-combatants can sometimes be employed in the public sector. The most common employer is the national armed forces, which can give work to large numbers of ex-combatants who would otherwise be unemployed (Call & Stanley, 2003:215). The advantages of military mergers must, however, be weighed against the problems of budget constraints and of the potential security risks that accompany oversized national armies (see also Chapter 5.1). Employment in the civil services is often not feasible for uneducated ex-combatants (*Liberian...*, 2003: 37). In countries where this has been

possible, such as Namibia and Zimbabwe, large numbers of ex-combatants have been rewarded with public posts. In both Namibia and Zimbabwe this has, however, led to other problems such as oversized budgets and reduced efficiency (*Disarmament...*, 2004:71).

A more appropriate strategy is for national governments to employ demobilised combatants in construction or the rehabilitation of infrastructure (Nübler, 2000:59). With the arrival of peace, buildings and infrastructure need to be rebuilt and repaired, which creates a large demand for unqualified labour. Being unskilled and having low or no education, makes ex-combatants a suitable group to recruit from (UN, 2001:54). Since reconstruction booms are temporary in nature, it is important to see employment in construction and the rehabilitation of infrastructure as a temporary solution (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:176).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Most ex-combatants end up in the informal sector. It is therefore wise to ensure that former combatants attain a basic knowledge of market structures, accounting and management and have access to credit schemes and apprenticeships or on-the-job training. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training have proven more affective than vocational training and should therefore be prioritised. Such initiatives should always be preceded by proper market studies and be demand driven. Creating employment opportunities in construction or the rehabilitation of infrastructure is also recommended.

### **5.3 The Political Influence of Ex-Combatants**

During war, alternative political institutions are created, such as militias and guerrilla groups. By using violence and intimidation, these groups can change established power structures and take control over large tracks of territory. Being a member of such a group also offers individuals the opportunity for political empowerment. Through the use of arms, combatants can reverse old relationships of dominance and humiliation that they may have suffered under in their local societies. It can also give them the power to extract revenge on individuals who wronged

them in the past (Keen, 2000b:23, 25; Lyons, 2004:269, 271; Utas, 2003:15-16).

According to some scholars, it is necessary to ensure that ex-combatants do not become politically marginalised after demobilisation. It is, in other words, crucial that they are allowed to influence decisions affecting them. Failure to do so could at worst lead to renewed warfare (Spencer, 1997:65; *Disarmament...*, 2004:26). A similar line of thinking can be found among those who argue that for peace to prevail, it is crucial that former rebels are encouraged to engage in normal politics (Zartman, 1995:337). It is then not far-fetched to argue that if the political system includes political parties, which ex-combatants believe represent their interests, ex-combatants may be less inclined to resort to violence.

### **Practical Work with the Political Influence of Ex-Combatants**

It is not uncommon for ex-combatants to feel frustrated and dissatisfied that they have few possibilities to decide their own fates. One of the reasons is that demobilised combatants are often seen only as recipients of assistance rather than as a potential resource (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:36). It is therefore important to find ways to involve former combatants in the reintegration programmes that affect them. Ex-combatants can be encouraged to participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programmes. Increasing ex-combatants' ownership over reintegration programmes is a fairly easy way to increase the legitimacy of the process (Bendana, 1997: 250; *Disarmament...*, 2004:69-70; WB, 2001:65; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:36; Spencer, 1997:65). The involvement of ex-combatants in reintegration projects has been especially successful in post-war societies in Central America. In Nicaragua, for example, former combatants were responsible for collectively building their own houses while some were engaged in training activities and mediation in local conflicts (Bendana, 1997:250; Spencer, 1997:65).

To press their demands, ex-combatants often found so-called veterans' organisations. In El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Uganda, veterans'

organisations have played an important role in protecting and advancing the interests of demobilised soldiers and guerrilla fighters. Supporting such organisations can be a fruitful way of making sure that ex-combatants do not become politically marginalised. It can also be useful for governments and donor agencies to work in conjunction with ex-combatant organisations. They can, for example, be responsible for training programmes. Involving veterans' organisations in reintegration programmes proved to be successful in both Ethiopia and Somaliland. (Berdal, 1996:49; Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177-79; *Disarmament...*, 2004:71). There are, however, risks involved in supporting such organisations, as they can easily remobilise dissatisfied ex-combatants. In Zimbabwe, for example, the organisation for war veterans has used violence against white farmers (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177-79). The main dilemma with veterans' organisations is that while they are created to eliminate the grievances ex-combatants, they are dependent on the continuation of the reintegration problem in order to survive (Schafer, 1998:209). Supporting veterans' organisations should therefore be seen as a temporary solution. In the long run it is better to encourage ex-combatants to participate in politics as normal civilians.

It is also essential to ensure that ex-combatants have access to the political institutions of the state. Before the first national elections are held, after the end of hostilities, it may be necessary to create power-sharing arrangements. In such an institutional makeup, all parties to the conflict are represented in the national government. The parties can thereby control each other, making them feel less vulnerable to surprise attacks (Snyder & Jervis, 1999:18; Walter, 1999:46, 49). This can be a good way to make ex-combatants on all sides feel secure, have confidence in the peace process, and have leaders in the government who represent their interests.

At the same time it is imperative to support the transformation of rebel armies and militias into political parties working within the political system. If military leaders and ex-combatants believe that it is possible for them to

gain political influence through participation in national elections, it is more likely that the transition to peace will be successful (Lyon, 2004:285, 293).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Ex-combatants should be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of reintegration programmes. One way of doing this is to involve and support veterans' organisations. Support to such organisations should, however, only be seen as a temporary solution. Aid can also be given to facilitate the transformation of warring parties to political parties.

#### **5.4 Safeguarding the Societal Prestige of Ex-Combatants**

A final form of empowerment is the societal prestige that combatants gain from carrying arms. Being part of an armed group can give a certain status in society. As protectors of local communities, combatants and warlords often receive the respect and appreciation of the local population (Lundin, 1998:105; Lyons, 2004:269; Spear, 2002:145). Combatants can also be filled with a sense of pride and accomplishment that they are taking part in an important struggle (Schafer, 2001:229, 231). In some conflict areas, participation in violence symbolises boys' ascent to manhood (Peteet, 2002:260, 263; Utas 2003:9). Becoming a combatant can therefore have a great symbolic value.

With the arrival of peace, combatants risk losing the status associated with being a fighter. This loss can be threatening for both soldiers and guerrillas. Ex-combatants therefore need to be given new roles in society that grant them an equivalent amount of prestige or, if possible, at least acknowledge the positive role they had during the conflict. Failure to do so may result in ex-combatants creating new roles for themselves in society, such as that of vigilantes, which guarantees continued societal respect through the usage of violence (Spear, 2002:145). Safeguarding the societal prestige of ex-combatants must, however, be done with great care, as ex-combatants may have committed serious atrocities. In some post-conflict societies, it may not even be possible, since it would make reconciliation extremely difficult.

## **Practical Work with Safeguarding the Societal Prestige of Ex-Combatants**

There are several symbolic measures by which society can show its appreciation for the sacrifices ex-combatants have made. One common method is to allow military veterans to participate in the celebration of national holidays or important historical celebrations. In the United States, for example, war veterans participate in parades celebrating the Fourth of July. Another possibility is for governmental officials and politicians to publicly state their appreciation in speeches. The creation of monuments can also be an important way to send a similar message. This strategy has been employed in many European countries where the sacrifices of soldiers who fought in both world wars are commemorated with monuments.

Such symbolic measures are most appropriate in societies that have gone through interstate wars, where citizens tend to be more united in their support of the armed forces. This is seldom the case in intrastate wars, where one's hero is another's oppressor. Symbolic measures can therefore make societal reconciliation more problematic in post-civil war societies. An exception is possibly wars of liberation, where society tends to be more united in its support for one side. However, there are always portions of the population that support the occupying regime. Too blunt a hailing of those who fought for liberation may give rise to societal tensions. In Namibia, the status given to former armed members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) can be contrasted with the open marginalisation of those Namibians who served in the forces controlled by South Africa (Preston, 1997).

A more fruitful way to ensure the societal prestige of ex-combatants, especially in post-civil war societies, may be to award them new roles that give an equivalent amount of prestige. Seeing as combatants are often seen as protecting the security of society, incorporating former guerrillas into the national armed forces or the police may be a useful method. It can be especially wise to allow former guerrilla members of a certain ethnic background to police their own communities. This may not only be a



good way to give ethnic minorities an increased sense of security, but also a way to allow ex-guerrillas to continue seeing themselves as protectors of their communities. This approach has been used in Kosovo where former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) combatants were given preferential access to a civilian protection corps and the police service (Özerdem, 2002:966). Including ex-combatants in the security forces can be problematic in conflicts where the most serious excesses have been committed. Under such circumstances, the best way to give ex-combatants some societal prestige is to ensure they have access to gainful and meaningful employment.

*Focus for development co-operation:* The best way to safeguard the prestige of ex-combatants, without making reconciliation more difficult is to find new roles for former combatants that give them a similar amount of status. Employing them in the armed forces or the national police, or at least ensuring that they have access to gainful and meaningful occupation can do this.

# 6 Healing the Wounds of War

The violence that combatants commit and witness may not only cause psychological trauma for the offenders and victims but also create severe societal strains making reintegration extremely difficult. It is therefore imperative that there are efforts at societal reconciliation and mechanisms for dealing with the war trauma of ex-combatants.<sup>12</sup>

## 6.1 Reconciliation

Carrying a gun is unlikely to give the same sense of societal prestige in all armed conflicts. The amount of prestige is probably tied to the level of social capital an armed group has among the local population. One can argue that social capital is higher if two conditions are met. First, if the population and the armed group share the same identity, whether it be ethnic, ideological or regional. Second, if the armed group is dependent on the local population for its survival and financing. If these two criteria are met, combatants are probably more likely to be seen as protecting the interests of society since there are clear bonds between the two. However, groups lacking social capital often disregard the interests of the civilian population by engaging in pillaging and the indiscriminate use of force.<sup>13</sup> Being a member of an armed group that has low social capital can therefore have severe social

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<sup>12</sup> The factors concerning healing have been derived from the literature on DD&R.

<sup>13</sup> This line of thinking has been influenced by Weinstein (2002) and (2003).

repercussions once peace arrives, because reintegration will probably be more difficult.

The atrocities combatants sometimes commit wounds the fabric of society. Once peace arrives society must deal with these issues, both within the local communities and at the national level. Many argue that such circumstances require reconciliation between perpetrators of violence and their victims (Alden, 2002:351-54; Kingma, 1999:8; Schafer, 2001:218, 230, 237). Creating new relations between ex-combatants and civilians also requires that former combatants are given new norms and values that deal with how to resolve conflicts without using violence (Kingma, 1999:8; Spencer, 1997:63). These actions are one way of facilitating the social assimilation of ex-combatants. If such measures are not carried out, demobilised combatants will more likely take to arms (*Disarmament...*, 2004:26; Kingma, 1999:8).

### **Practical Work with Reconciliation**

Reconciliation can best be described as “a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace” (Brounéus, 2003:3).

At the national level, the granting of amnesty to combatants is often a central component of reconciliation. However, general amnesties can meet considerable opposition from those who have suffered at the hands of combatants and from the international community. Certain conditions or restrictions are therefore often called for. Responsible commanders and leaders may be put on trial, or individuals who have committed the most serious atrocities may be exempted from amnesty. An alternative is to condition amnesty with telling the truth, so-called truth commissions. Truth commissions also touch upon another problem. Should there be a national effort to establish what happened during the war or is it best to let the past be?

Even though it is important to initiate national reconciliation, the bulk of reconciliation is done at the local

level. The key to local reconciliation is for ex-combatants to gain acceptance and support from the local community (*Disarmament...*, 2004:86; Kingma, 2000c:222). *This process can best be described by using the five-step model for the psychosocial recovery of war-affected communities developed by Maynard (1997).*

The first phase entails the creation of a safe environment. No reconciliation can be made without restoring a sense of security where both ex-combatants and the civilian population feel safe. This necessitates an end to hostilities and the establishment of law and order (see also Chapter 5.1). Physical security may, however, not be sufficient. It is just as important to reduce fears. For returning ex-combatants, it is imperative that they do not fear reprisals from their old adversaries or the civilian population. On the other hand, wartime experiences may lead local communities to fear the return of ex-combatants. The resettlement of ex-combatants must therefore be preceded by sensitisation campaigns that build public confidence in the reintegration process and address the fears of ex-combatants. Holding workshops, seminars, and information campaigns on the radio and TV and in the press can do this. It may be especially appropriate to engage women's and youth groups and religious institutions in this process (Kingma, 2000:220c; UN, 1999:77-78; WB, 2001:24, 46). At the time of arrival, it is wise to organise meetings where the ex-combatants are formally introduced. Sensitisation campaigns proved especially helpful in Uganda where many decades of civil strife had caused fear of and disrespect for combatants (Kingma, 2000c:220). It may not always be possible, however, to reconcile ex-combatants with their communities. Under such situations it may be wiser to relocate them to new areas (Lundin, 1998:106-07).

The second phase entails a collective sharing of wartime experiences. Organising public and symbolic ceremonies dealing with trauma and healing can be useful in this context. Such exercises can reduce suspicion and help build trust and are especially important for ex-combatants who come from armed groups with low social capital. In some cultures, it is also possible to

use traditional cleansing rituals. The rituals symbolise combatants' metamorphosis from warrior to civilian and their acceptance into the community. Cleansing rituals proved especially fruitful in gaining the support of local communities for returning RENAMO fighters in Mozambique. Such rituals are, however, most effective in rural settings where traditional forms of reconciliation are still an important part of people's lives. Cleansing rituals proved much less important in Mozambique's urban centres (Alden, 2002:352; Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:178; Lundin, 1998:106-07). Religious ceremonies can also have an important effect. In Mozambique, ecumenical ceremonies promoting reconciliation were held in major cities. Religious communities have also played a central role in reconciliation processes in Cambodia and Namibia (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:178; Lundin, 1998:107).

The third phase, renewing interpersonal relationships and rebuilding trust between ex-combatants and the civilian population, is much about fostering the belief that they depend on each other and share a common future. Ex-combatants should be seen as making a valuable contribution to the community and show a willingness and capacity to work. In rural areas, ex-combatants can take part in traditional labour-sharing agreements, whereby they assist the local community in cultivating the land and at the same time earn a living. When it comes to education and training, the skills acquired should be needed by the local community. The local community, on their part, can make gestures of good will. In some areas, ex-combatants have been given small plots of lands to cultivate or been allowed to marry local women (Disarmament..., 2004:66, 81; Kingma, 2000c:222-23).

For donors the aim should be to avoid, as much as possible, aid that only benefits demobilised combatants. Aid that exclusively targets ex-combatants risks creating resentment from the local population, making social assimilation and reconciliation more difficult. Donors should therefore seek to incorporate assistance to ex-combatants into more broad-based development projects. If this is not

possible, it is essential that the receiving community also be given some assistance. Making sure that the local community also benefits from the reintegration process helps to foster unity and increases the communities' capacity to reintegrate ex-combatants. Including assistance to the wider community necessitates that community representatives participate in the planning and implementation of the reintegration process (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:176-77; Disarmament..., 2004:66; WB, 2001:24, 56). Even though there is more or less a consensus that reintegration assistance should be community based, it is rarely the case in reality. The main problem is that there are very few donors with the mandate and resources to support projects that encompass several target groups (Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004).

After rebuilding trust between ex-combatants and local communities, personal and social morality must be re-established. In war, social norms and rules are sidelined, especially by those participating in the fighting (Maynard, 1997:215). Demobilised combatants should be given the opportunity to learn how to solve conflicts without resorting to violence (Spencer, 1997:63). This can be done by organising courses in peace training for ex-combatants. Participating in education and training programmes also has a positive effect, since it allows ex-combatants to learn the norms and practices of civil society (Nübler, 2000:65).

The final phase entails creating a democratic discourse and process involving the different social groupings in society, including ex-combatants. The development of local democratic institutions is a good way of ensuring that ex-combatants, among others, are able to influence decisions affecting them. Another possibility is to incorporate ex-combatants into community organisations responsible for the planning and implementation of development projects.

*Focus for development co-operation:* Reconciliation can best be supported at the community level. This can be done by initiating sensitisation campaigns and helping in the organisation of public healing ceremonies and traditional cleansing rituals. It is also important that ex-combatants

and receiving communities share a sense of a common future. Assistance to ex-combatants must therefore be seen as making a contribution to the whole community. Reconciliation may necessitate bringing those who have committed the most serious abuses to justice.

## **6.2 The Psychological Traumas of Ex-Combatants**

Combatants often carry out, suffer from or witness horrific violence. Being exposed to such violence — in conjunction with feelings of deprivation, loss of meaning and control and exposure to fighting — may lead to psychological trauma. The loss of family members and friends may cause further trauma. Suffering from such illnesses can have severe effects on individuals — making them more prone to use violence, drugs, and alcohol and commit suicide — and making social assimilation more difficult (Kingma, 1999:8; Maynard, 1997:205, 207-10).

These psychological scars must be dealt with. Ex-combatants often suffer from so-called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), forcing them to relive the traumas experienced during the war. PTSD negatively affects the ability of ex-combatants to become functioning members of society as they suffer from anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, hostility, despair, and destroyed capacity for social trust (Maynard, 1997:206). Such trauma may influence the eruption of new violence (Kingma, 1999:8).

### **Practical Work with Psychological Trauma**

According to some scholars, the establishment of healthy relationships with society is the most central ingredient in dealing with traumatised ex-combatants. To accomplish this, traumatised individuals must first have a sense of security and begin to come to terms with the traumatic event (Maynard, 1997:209). In this process it may be necessary to offer ex-combatants psychotherapy, medication and counselling. Many post-conflict societies, however, lack mental health institutions that provide such services. Hence, capacity building in the mental health sector needs support. Since there are seldom centralised psychiatric units and hospitals in developing countries, it

may be most appropriate to do this by promoting community-based mental health treatment services. The lack of proper medical institutions also means that families and the local community act as caretakers for ex-combatants suffering from psychological illnesses. Assistance to caretakers may therefore also be necessary (*Disarmament...*, 2004:89-91).

Traumatised ex-combatants also need different sorts of counselling, which medical institutions usually cannot offer. Counselling can be an appropriate forum for listening, understanding, giving of advice, assimilating the trauma socially and the ritual cleansing of ex-combatants. Such help can be provided by families, religious communities, NGOs and age groups and should be based on local traditions and customs (*Disarmament...*, 2004:89-91). Providing psychosocial support during different sorts of training programmes, such as vocational training, may be a way to ensure that ex-combatants at least get a minimal amount of assistance. Participation in training programmes can furthermore be therapeutic, as it can help ex-combatants find a new identity and build self-confidence (Nübler, 2000:65; *Strategic...*, 2004:32).

Supporting different forms of traditional cleansing-rituals used by local communities can be wise. Such rituals not only symbolise society's acceptance of the ex-combatant but may also have positive effects on the mental well-being of the ex-combatant. Even though cleansing-rituals can have a positive impact, it is not evident that they should totally replace clinical assistance (Kingma, 1999:8).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Support the ability of local communities to deal with ex-combatants' war traumas by promoting community-based mental health treatment services. Furthermore, ex-combatants need access to forums where they can receive counselling.

To summarise the last two chapters, in order to deal with the three challenges ex-combatants pose and ensure their full reintegration into society, it is important that all factors concerning peacetime substitutes and healing are taken into consideration. Donors must therefore identify



which set of substitutes and factors of healing cannot be addressed by the ex-combatants themselves, by the receiving communities, or by the national governments and thereafter find appropriate ways to deal with these factors in co-operation with local stakeholders.

# 7 Contextual Factors that Make Reintegration More Difficult

There are four contextual factors<sup>14</sup> that make it tempting for ex-combatants to re-engage in violence: the existence of armed groups, access to natural resources that are easy to loot, a high availability of weapons, and insufficient control by the central governments over their own territory. When planning reintegration assistance, donors and practitioners should be aware that reintegration will be more difficult in environments where these factors exist.

## 7.1 Armed Groups

Demobilised combatants have military skills that are in high demand by armed factions that have not demobilised. It often occurs that ex-combatants are recruited, either voluntarily or forcibly, by spoilers or groups fighting wars in other countries.

Starting a rebellion is a costly and complicated affair. For a guerrilla group to survive it must have a certain size. This size naturally varies, but empirical evidence shows that it usually consists of at least 500 individuals (Collier, 2000:842, 850, 852). For disgruntled ex-combatants it may therefore be much easier to join groups that are already in existence than to recreate new ones. One example is of former Tuareg rebels from Mali. Demo-

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<sup>14</sup> The contextual factors that tempt ex-combatants, with the exception of the disarmament of society, have all been derived from the general literature on conflict resolution and from empirical data. Disarmament of society has been derived from the literature on DD&R.

bilised in 1996, several were paid by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), an Islamist guerrilla group fighting the Algerian regime, to join them. (Altervision, May 5, 2004; AFP, Febr. 3, 2004). At times, former combatants are also forced to join armed groups. In Uganda, demobilised government soldiers in the northern part of the country were pressured into joining rebel groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (Kingma, 2000c:239).

### **Practical Work with Armed Groups**

Armed actors standing outside the DD&R process, irrespective of whether they are domestic spoilers or armed actors in other countries, thus constitute a serious problem. Spoilers make it difficult to create a secure environment, which is central to any successful DD&R process. It is therefore imperative to identify whether there is any chance of inducing potential spoilers to participate in the peace process (Stedman, 2002:12). If not, it will be necessary to find ways to marginalise them, making it difficult for the groups to recruit ex-combatants.

Civil wars are often based in a regional setting involving several countries and armed groups. Such a setting can be described as a regional security complex where the national securities of several neighbouring countries cannot be considered in isolation from one another (Buzan, 1991:190). Civil wars in a regional security complex are often interconnected with each other, such as those in West Africa, the Great Lakes or the Middle East. If there is no regional approach to peace initiatives in such a setting, it is likely that demobilised combatants in one country will become mercenaries in neighbouring civil wars. This has occurred in West Africa and the Albanian populated areas of the Balkans (African Research Bulletin, Oct. 2002:15051; IRIN, Febr. 2, 2004; "Macedonia...", 2001:1, 5; Reuters, Dec. 11, 2001). Once a series of peace agreements have regulated the conflicts of a region, it is important to support initiatives that aim to strengthen regional security. Such initiatives can play an important role in hindering the movement of ex-combatants seeking

to destabilise neighbouring countries (Sawyer, 2004:456-57).

*Focus for development co-operation:* If possible, seek to induce armed groups that stand outside the peace process to join. Otherwise, it will be necessary to find ways to marginalise them. Supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening co-operation on regional security is a good way to hinder disgruntled ex-combatants from undermining the security of neighbouring states.

## **7.2 Spoils**

It is also plausible that the existence of primary commodity exports, so-called spoils, increases the likelihood of ex-combatants engaging in violence, especially if the goods are situated in areas lacking government control. Some authors argue that the main incentive for rebellion is the opportunity for personal enrichment. They argue that guerrilla groups appear in countries that are dependent on the export of certain natural resources, such as diamonds, timber and drugs. By illegally taxing the trade of such commodities, guerrilla groups can enrich themselves. Even in armed conflicts driven foremost by grievances, the prey on primary commodities may become an important means of sustaining the rebellion (Collier, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000). With experience in looting and illegal taxation, ex-combatants may also resort to arms to enrich themselves if the extraction and export of natural resources are not properly protected. In the Republic of Congo, for example, former Ninja rebels have been involved in the plunder of trains carrying cement, oil and petroleum (IRIN, Oct. 11, 2004).

### **Practical Work with Spoils**

In post-war societies the temptation for ex-combatants to engage in plunder and illegal taxation of valuable natural resources must be minimised. This requires that the central authority provide adequate security for those who extract and transfer such goods, through the deployment of police forces. Under these circumstances, it is important that the police are under civilian, democratic control.

This is a way to ensure transparency and accountability, making it harder for police forces to engage in illegal trade or corruption (Berdal & Malone, 2000:5, 8).

It is furthermore necessary to target those countries and companies that willingly engage in illegal trade through different sorts of warnings and sanctions. One example is the UN's sanctions against Liberia, because of the role of ex-President Charles Taylor in the illegal diamond trade from Sierra Leone (*Tackling Liberia...*, 2003:1). The demand for illegally expropriated primary commodities can thereby be limited.

*Focus for development co-operation:* Ensure that primary commodity exports are well protected by reformed national police forces under democratic control. Target countries and companies that engage in illegal trade by issuing warnings or initiating sanctions.

### **7.3 Lack of Disarmament**

A third tempting factor is whether there are large numbers of arms in circulation after a peace agreement. If this is the case, it may be easier for ex-combatants to resort to violence and banditry. This seems to be especially true if there is a high rate of unemployment among former combatants (Call & Stanley, 2003:216; Gamba, 2003:126; Spencer, 1997:62-63).

#### **Practical Work with Disarmament**

In most DD&R processes combatants are disarmed when they arrive at designated assembly areas, where they are required to hand in a weapon in order to get benefits. Even though large quantities of weapons are collected during the official disarmament phase, it is usually impossible to collect all weapons. Significant numbers of weapons often remain in circulation. In Mozambique, for example, where the disarmament process is sometimes seen as a success, only 190,000 light weapons of an estimated 6 million were collected (Spear, 2002:144).

The weakness of formal disarmament processes underlines the need to have continual weapons collection drives after the formal termination of disarmament. This is espe-

cially true amongst the civilian population who often arm themselves for protection during hostilities. The collection of weapons can be based on voluntary surrender, forced collection, or the giving of incentives. Forced surrender should be avoided if possible, since it tends to be dangerous and risks alienating the public. Voluntary surrenders can include amnesties where people give up weapons without risking penalties (*Disarmament...*, 2004:39-41; UN, 1999:55). Amnesties are, however, not always effective, especially if there has been no prior improvement in security. Voluntary campaigns have had meagre results in countries like Georgia (Ajaria), Iraq and Uganda (BBC News, May 16, 2004; *Dagens Nyheter*, June 11, 2003; IRIN, Sept. 27, 2004).

It may instead be necessary to create incentive programmes that offer certain benefits if people hand in their guns. Incentives can vary from cash payments to the giving of goods, food, or development assistance. Weapons buy-back schemes are usually the least suitable since they increase the demand for arms at a time when it should drop. The result can be that arms flood back to a region and that groups buy new weapons from the money gained from turning old ones in (*Disarmament...*, 2004:41; UN, 1999:66-67). In Chad, for example, military officers who were responsible for the arms brought in under the buy-back programme later sold them creating a local market for arms (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:173). A popular alternative is programmes offering development in exchange for weapons. Such programmes can contribute to economic development, while avoiding the negative side-effects of buy-back programmes. These development programmes can be directed to either individuals turning in a weapon or an entire community. Individuals handing over weapons can be given vocational training, while communities agreeing to create a weapons-free environment can receive development assistance (*Disarmament...*, 2004:41; UN, 1999:67). The programmes have, however, proven to be too expensive to be used on a national level and are only applicable in specifically chosen local communities (Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004).

Irrespective of the format that weapons collection programmes take, they will only succeed if there is a general increase of security in society and if there is legitimacy for the peace process. This entails a willingness among the main political actors to abide by the peace agreement and the launch of security sector reforms (see also Chapter 5.1). Creation of a sense of security is made easier if there is legislation regulating which weapons are legal and how they can be used, followed by a strict enforcement of those rules. It is furthermore essential that all forms of weapon collection programmes and legislation are preceded by awareness and information campaigns. This helps to create an atmosphere of trust and security and to convince local communities that their personal security is not dependent on them bearing arms. Experience has shown that people will only relinquish their arms if they feel secure (*Disarmament...*, 2004:41; Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004; UN, 1999:68).

To seek total disarmament may not be possible, or even desirable, as a certain level of weaponry exists in all societies (Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004). This is particularly true for certain communities where the possession of arms symbolises the ascent to manhood; gives societal prestige; is seen as necessary in order to defend family, land, and cattle; or is used in hunting. Disarmament in such communities must be culture-sensitive. The inability to understand the social importance of weaponry is seen as one of the reasons for the failure of the disarmament process in Somalia. Instead of aiming at total disarmament, it is necessary to define the normal level of armament in society and legislate rules that regulate the use of arms and what types are allowed (Spear, 2002:141, 143). In addition, it could be argued that disarmament should foremost be seen as a confidence-building measure symbolising society's transformation from war to peace (Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004). The number of weapons collected, according to this perspective, is of little importance. Its symbolic power can be stressed by having public manifestations after the termination of a weapons collecting programme (UN, 1999:69; Özerdem,

2002:965). In Mali, Niger, and the Republic of Congo, the authorities have organised large manifestations where collected guns have been burned, so-called flames of peace ceremonies.

A disarmament process is unlikely to be successful unless regional factors are taken into consideration. If there are simultaneous disarmament processes in a region, they must be co-ordinated. There is otherwise a risk that combatants will go to the country where they get the best benefits. The disarmament process in Liberia has experienced difficulties, because members of the Movement for Democracy for Liberia (MODEL) have been reluctant to disarm. One of the reasons is that combatants are waiting for the launch of the disarmament process in neighbouring Ivory Coast, where they are expecting to receive USD 900 for disarming, a much greater sum than the USD 300 offered in Liberia (IRIN, Oct. 13, 2004). Furthermore, since borders in conflict-ridden regions tend to be porous, national efforts at disarmament are seldom sufficient (Özdem, 2002:973). Weapon collecting programmes in the north-eastern Karamoja region of Uganda have proven unsuccessful because of the ease with which arms continue to arrive from Kenya (IRIN, Sept. 27, 2004). In such cases, it is important to support regional disarmament initiatives.

*Focus for development co-operation:* Support continues efforts to disarm society. Such efforts will only succeed if there is a sense of security amongst the population. This can best be achieved by supporting security sector reform and legislation regulating the use and possession of weapons. All of these measures should be preceded by awareness and information campaigns.

## **7.4 Security Vacuum**

The final factor concerns whether governments have control over their own territories. If the state fails to guarantee the security of its citizens and their property, violent entrepreneurs may engage in plundering. Such entrepreneurs can be anything from guerrilla groups and mercenaries to private security firms and criminal



groups. (Mehlum, Moene & Torvik, 2002:447-49; Mueller, 2003: 508). The need to expand governmental control with the arrival of peace is also underlined by the fact that rebel groups often need sanctuaries, where they can retreat from governmental forces, in order to survive. These sanctuaries tend to be remote territories with low population densities or neighbouring countries (Gates, 2002: 126). It is no coincidence that ex-combatants have engaged in both armed banditry and political violence in large, sparsely populated countries like Mali and Niger, both of which lack strong national armies<sup>15</sup> (African Research Bulletin, Nov. 2000:14204 and Sept. 2001: 14563; IRIN, June 10, 2004). It is therefore arguable that ex-combatants are more prone to engage in different forms of violence if there are areas where they can operate outside the control of the state.

### **Practical Work with Security Vacuums**

Restoring a credible central authority and forming a strong national police force under civilian, democratic control, are efficient ways of rebuilding internal security (WB, 2001:11). Without a sufficiently strong police force, it is difficult to ensure that parts of the country do not become safe havens for armed groups engaged in political violence or illegal economic activities.

Giving responsibility for internal security to the police, rather than the national army, is preferable as the armed forces tend to use overwhelming force and are not educated to police the population. Furthermore, police have more day-to-day contact with the local population and are thereby better at recognising early signs of illegal armed activities.<sup>16</sup> It may be especially fruitful to include ex-combatants in the police, seeing as they have good knowledge of and contacts with other ex-combatants and their activities.

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<sup>15</sup> When former Tuareg rebels were engaged in hostilities in Mali in 2000, Mali had an armed force of 7,350 and 4,800 paramilitaries (The Military Balance 2000-2001, 2000:275-76). In 2004 former Tuareg guerillas rebelled in Niger. At that time Niger had an armed force of 5,300 and 5,400 paramilitaries (The Military Balance. 2004-2005, 2004:240).

<sup>16</sup> This line of thinking has been inspired by Sawyer (2004).

In many post-civil war societies it is not possible to speak of either a central authority or police forces controlling the country's territory and upholding law and order. In such societies a short-term alternative is to invite foreign troops to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country and police the population until there is a functioning central authority that can resume control over national security. One example is the UN force in Sierra Leon, which has successfully hindered violence induced by ex-combatants. Demobilised combatants seeking to engage in violence went instead to Liberia, Guinea and the Ivory Coast, countries with less stable national security situations (African Research Bulletin, Oct. 2002:15051; IRIN, Febr. 2, 2004; Reuters, Dec. 11, 2001).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Assist in the creation and reform of a strong and democratically controlled national police force that holds sole responsibility for internal security. It can be wise to include ex-combatants in such a force.

# 8 Ex-Combatants — A Heterogeneous Group

Demobilised combatants are by no means a homogenous group. On the contrary there can be great differences depending on their health, age, sex, and rank and the type of warring party they belonged to. Failure to realise that different categories of ex-combatants have different needs can have dire consequences. The same can be said about the environment into which ex-combatants reintegrate. Reintegration into rural and urban environments poses different challenges. The following will discuss factors that are especially important to keep in mind when working with different categories of ex-combatants and different reintegration environments.

## **8.1 Female Ex-Combatants**

In many civil wars women play an important role as combatants. Around 30% of the Sandinista army in Nicaragua, and 25%—30 % of the guerrillas in El Salvador, Eritrea and Sri Lanka were women (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:11). The large numbers of female combatants represent a special challenge for reintegration processes, since women have different experiences and needs than their male counterparts.

As it is for men, taking part in war can be empowering for women. This may in fact be especially true for women. Living in societies with clear gender roles — where women are systematically discriminated — war may be one way to gain a career and equality. As combat-

ants, men and women are encouraged to act in the same way and have the same rights and duties, giving female combatants a sense of pride and self-confidence. It is especially in wars of liberation and revolutionary struggles that women take part. An important reason is that many revolutionary groups, often based on a Marxist-Leninist ideology, include the improvement of women's rights and equality between the sexes in their programmes (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:1, 11-12, 27; Nübler, 2000:54).

After demobilisation, female ex-combatants are expected to return to their traditional roles, something they are often reluctant to do (Nübler, 2000:54). This reluctance may create severe tensions in society. In Eritrea, for example, the divorce rate was 27% among married female ex-combatants after demobilisation (Kingma, 2000c:231). In Chad, Namibia, and Nicaragua, female ex-combatants have suffered from much domestic violence at the hands of their husbands (*Conflict, Peace-Building...*, 2001:1-2). Returning female ex-combatants also tend to face resentment in their local communities, since they have breached societal norms by bearing arms. This may result in prejudice and stereotypes equating female combatants with prostitutes (*Disarmament...*, 2004:89).

In many DD&R processes, female ex-combatants receive less support than their male counterparts. This is mainly due to four reasons. First, demobilised female combatants are seen as less of a security threat than their male counterparts. This has resulted in men being given priority to reintegration assistance (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:7). Second, female ex-combatants are often reluctant to admit their status, since it can have dire social consequences. Many therefore refrain from registering themselves as ex-combatants (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:8). Third, male ex-combatants are sometimes unwilling to acknowledge the role played by their female comrades, denying them status as ex-combatants (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:7-8). Demobilised female combatants are, finally, constrained by gender-specific obstacles in post-war societies. Women tend to have less access to knowledge, skills, information,

resources and employment opportunities. Male ex-combatants are therefore better equipped to take advantage of reintegration benefits. Due to such structures, reintegration processes must pay specific attention to the needs and demands of female ex-combatants. If this is not done, there is a risk that reintegration assistance will re-establish and reinforce unequal gender relations (*Conflict, Peace-Building...*, 2001:1; Nübler, 2000:63).

One of the main problems for female combatants is that they are often expected to go to the same demobilisation centres as their male counterparts. Fearing for their security and the social repercussions of admitting being a combatant, many refrain from registering. One solution is therefore to create separate DD&R processes for women combatants. It is important that such DD&R processes are subtle and discrete, to minimise possible social repercussions. After the official DD&R process is terminated, it is wise to support retroactive reintegration programmes to help those who still have doubts about admitting their status (Coulter, Nov. 3, 2004; Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004).

The first question that must be tackled when reintegrating women ex-combatants is whether they should return to their old communities. Female ex-combatants may not wish to return home, fearing they will be forced to relinquish their newly found equality. Others may not be welcomed by their families, because of their personal transformations. Those who wish to return need help with family reunification, while those who resettle in new areas must be given assistance to rebuild their civilian lives (*Liberian...*, 2003:66-67; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:38).

It is important to support community sensitisation programmes, irrespective of where female ex-combatants choose to relocate. Receiving communities must be prepared and informed about the special needs of women ex-combatants. Such efforts may help to defuse the question. Appropriate methods can be to use radio and the press and organise community meetings involving teachers, community and religious leaders and local authorities. Training and awareness raising about the problem of

gender based violence can be an important part of a community sensitisation programme. This can be a good way to tackle the problem of female ex-combatants who are being physically abused by their husbands (WB, 2001:58-59; *Liberian...*, 2003:66-67).

It is furthermore necessary to create clear legal guidelines that state what rights and benefits female ex-combatants are entitled to. These guidelines must become known to local communities and implementers. Since female ex-combatants often have less access to information than their male counterparts, it is especially important that they are informed of their demobilisation and reintegration rights (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:178; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:38).

Once they have resettled, female ex-combatants need access to psychosocial counselling that is sensitive to their wartime experiences, such as sexual abuse, and the specific problems they face during reintegration. Involving women's groups and organisations experienced in counselling victims of sexual abuse, providing reproductive health counselling and giving human rights assistance may be useful (*Liberian...*, 2003:64, 66-67).

Finally, female demobilised combatants must have access to training and education, since this is something they often lack. Education and training are especially important for women who wish to become financially independent and support themselves and their children. Since women are more restricted when it comes to travelling than men, they need access to educational capacities in their local communities. Any credible effort to support female ex-combatants to gain an education and find gainful employment must also include provisions for child care support (*Disarmament...*, 2004:89; UN, 1999:91; *Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:38).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Female ex-combatants should have DD&R processes exclusively targeting them. There should also be retroactive reintegration programmes for latecomers who fear for their security. Aid should focus especially on supporting sensitisation programmes, providing psychosocial counselling and of-

fering access to training and education. It is essential that there are clear legal guidelines stating the rights of female combatants.

## **8.2 Child Soldiers**

In 2002 it was estimated that as many as 300,000 children bore arms in different war zones around the world (Verhey, 2002:1). Although children make up such a large portion of military personnel, the special needs of demobilised child soldiers are still often overlooked (Kingma 2000c:231-32). Even when benefits specifically target demobilised children, other obstacles may remain. Armed groups seldom acknowledge the presence of child soldiers in their ranks since the international community frowns upon child recruitment. The consequence is that substantial numbers of child soldiers are not demobilised through official DD&R channels. Around 30% of all child combatants do not enter formal DD&R processes. This high number is also due to the requirement that combatants usually need to hand in a weapon to be registered as an ex-combatant. Many child soldiers do not possess their own weapons and, thus, do not become eligible for reintegration benefits. To overcome these obstacles, DD&R processes must address four things at the onset. First, include rights for child soldiers already in the peace agreement. Second, separate child soldiers as early as possible from their fighting units and place them in separate demobilisation centres. Third, arrange mechanisms that allow for self-demobilised children to get access to reintegration benefits. Finally, do not require child soldiers to hand in a weapon to receive benefits (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:5; UN, 1999:21, 51, 87; Verhey, 2002:1-2).

A central issue when reintegrating child soldiers is to find ways to ensure their security. Former commanders and armed groups can easily pressure children into being re-recruited. A useful method to address this problem is to have strategies of accompaniment and family reunification, something that has successfully hindered re-recruitment in Angola. Members of community networks can accompany former child soldiers from demobilisation

centres and throughout the family reunification process. Being reunified with their families also makes child soldiers less vulnerable (Verhey, 2002:1). Giving child soldiers official demobilisation documents is also a useful method of hindering re-recruitment. With demobilisation documents they can prove that they have not deserted their military units (*Going Home*, 2003:13-14, 48).

After demobilisation, it is imperative that there are transit centres for housing the children while reunification with their families is being prepared. The children's families must first of all be located. Thereafter it is often necessary to launch sensitisation campaigns to prepare their families and communities for their return. The return of children who have participated in war may be a traumatic experience for all parties (UN, 1999:87-89; *Going Home*, 2003:38; Verhey, 2002:2-3). During their stay in the centres, it is appropriate to deal with health problems, identify any specific needs concerning education and training, and initiate desocialisation of aggressive wartime behaviours and resocialisation (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; UN, 1999:87-88).

Uniting former child soldiers with their families is seen as the single best way to guarantee their reintegration. Successful family reunification processes proved to be the key to reintegrating child soldiers in both Angola and El Salvador. In El Salvador 84% of the children said their family played the most important role in their reintegration (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; Verhey, 2002:3). Once the family is reunited, follow-up procedures are needed (UN, 1999:89). It is, however, not always possible to reunite children with their families because of orphanage or atrocities they may have committed. In such situations it is necessary to find appropriate foster homes that can fend for the children (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; Kingma, 2000c:231).

Like adult ex-combatants, demobilised child soldiers also need access to psychosocial support. This is, first, to address behaviour that is asocial, such as aggression that they have learned during the conflict and, second, to recover from different forms of trauma. Children who have



participated in war have, for example, often been subjected to sexual violence (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; *Disarmament...*, 2004:86). Psychosocial recovery is best done within the family and should be community based. Such an approach has proven more helpful than trauma assistance interventions based on Western methods. There are different forms of psychosocial support mechanisms. Traditional cleansing rituals and religious ceremonies have proven to be efficient. In Uganda for example such ceremonies have helped communities accept former child soldiers since they are no longer seen as 'contaminated' (Verhey, 2002:3-4).

Many child soldiers have never attended school or only done so for a short period of time. Demobilised children should therefore have access to education and different sorts of practical training programmes. All training and education should be based on the needs of the family. The same is true for income-generating activities. These are good ways of promoting social assimilation since they are seen as contributing something to the family and community (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; *Going Home*, 2003:63; Nübler, 2000:60; Verhey, 2002:3). Participation in learning exercises also has desirable side-effects. It gives children a positive identity and provides them with the opportunity to learn the norms and practices of civil society (Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer, 2004:177; Nübler, 2000:65). When it comes to more practical training, it has been shown that apprenticeships are superior to vocational training. Participating in vocational training usually requires a higher level of education than child soldiers have. Apprenticeships also have the advantage that orphans can sometimes be given a temporary home while being trained by craftspeople and local entrepreneurs (*Going Home*, 2003:63; Nübler, 2000:66).

Finally, provisions should be made to assist the special needs of girl child soldiers. It is estimated that 40% of all child soldiers are girls. Their families and communities may have trouble accepting them, because of the sensitivity of unmarried girls having been associated with armed men. The picture is further complicated by the

sexual abuse that many girl soldiers have suffered (*Peace as Disappointment*, 2002:5; UN, 1999:90-91).

*Focus for development co-operation*: Child soldiers should have access to separate DD&R channels and retroactive reintegration programmes. Support should focus on launching sensitisation campaigns, aiding family reunification, providing psychosocial counselling and offering education and training. Psychosocial recovery is best done within the family and should be community based. The rights of child soldiers should be stated in the peace agreement.

### **8.3 Ex-Combatants with Different Military Ranks**

Ignoring the military rank of ex-combatants can have negative effects. High-ranking officers and leaders who have achieved status and political influence due to the war have the most to lose. This — in conjunction with their organisational and managerial skills, resources, and higher expectations — warrants them special attention. It is not uncommon for former high-ranking officers to become disgruntled because they are given similar benefits as privates. The reintegration of demobilised government officers in Mozambique has, for example, proved to be problematic. Many became offended when they were given start-up kits of hoes, seeds, and buckets and were expected to become small-scale farmers like their former subordinates. It is believed that this is one of the reasons why former government officers today run many of Mozambique's criminal organisations (Alden, 2002:350; Berdal, 1996:48; *Disarmament...*, 2004:71-72; Nübler, 2000:54). The high-ranking officers of government forces have proven especially difficult to appease. This is partly because they often have more education and skills training than their guerrilla counterparts and therefore tend to have higher demands that are difficult to meet.

One way to appease demobilised officers is to give them monthly cash payments that are tied to their rank (Kingma, 2000c:224) or ensure that they are given new roles and activities that are seen as stimulating and living up to their status. It can therefore be wise to enrol them in

formal education, even higher education if they fulfil the requirements, and find ways to incorporate them into the political process, administration, or security forces.

There are also other reasons for giving special focus to high-ranking leaders and officers. As they may continue to have contacts with their subordinates after demobilisation, high-level officers can play an important role in 'selling' the peace to their followers. In El Salvador, for example, initial focus was placed on gaining the support of about 600 leaders of the FMLN, whereafter their subordinates followed (*Disarmament...*, 2004:71-72; Utas, 2003:245-46). Giving special treatment to those of higher ranks must, however, be done in a way so as not to alienate the lower ranks. If benefits to lower-ranked individuals are not given or are seen as insufficient, preferential treatment of high-ranked officers and leaders can be counter-productive. In Liberia and Mozambique frustrated lower-ranked combatants, claiming they have been sold out by their leadership, attacked their officers (*Africa Confidential*, Sept. 23, 1994:4; IRIN, April 19 and May 17, 2004). Tensions between different ranks of ex-combatants can pose a serious threat to post-conflict security, since they risk undermining the possibility of higher-ranked individuals to convince their followers to support the peace process. This has been a problem in Liberia where former commanders of Charles Taylor's armed forces have been unable to control looting by their former subordinates (IRIN, May 17, 2004).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Ex-combatants with high military rank should be given special attention. They need new roles and activities that are seen as stimulating and living up to their status. Offering them education and finding ways to incorporate them into the political process, administration or security forces can do this.

## **8.4 Type of Warring Faction**

When reintegrating ex-combatants, it is important to keep in mind what sort of armed faction they belonged to. An often-overlooked distinction is between former government soldiers and guerrillas. It is not uncommon that

rebel fighters are discriminated against and receive less reintegration benefits. This is probably because former rebel groups tend to have less access to state institutions and decision-making processes than other groups. It is therefore essential to support the political reintegration of former guerrillas and guerrilla groups (see also Chapter 5.3). The same logic can be applied to conflicts where there has been a clear victor. In such situations, it is imperative to find ways to ensure that ex-combatants on the losing side do not become politically marginalised.

Demobilised guerrillas also tend to be more vulnerable to security threats than their government counterparts. After being demobilised they can easily become targeted by security forces. Supporting limited military and police mergers and reforming the security forces can be a suitable way to deal with this problem (also see Chapter 5.1).

A distinction can also be made between ex-combatants belonging to different types of rebel groups. One must first be aware of the differences between insurgents who are material- and coercion-based and those who are identity-based. The RUF in Sierra Leone and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola are examples of material- and coercion-based groups. Such rebel groups are held together by economic incentives and force. Groups based on identity, such as the FMLN in El Salvador, on the other hand, have strong identities and belief systems that hold them together. The most appropriate method of reintegration will differ, depending on what type of rebel group the ex-combatants belonged to. Members of material- and coercion-based groups tend to be less committed to their organisations and to have participated for short-term gains or because they were coerced. For such individuals, material benefits such as cash payment schemes may be sufficient. However, members of identity-based groups are often highly committed to their struggle and have held long-term goals such as the economic and political transformation of state and society. This category of ex-combatants may crave more substantial benefits and reforms, such as access to

land, education, and political power. For identity-based ex-combatants it can therefore be especially important to reform political institutions and include them in the political process (Weinstein, 2002).

Another fault line is between mobile and stationary groups. In some armed conflicts, combatants continue to live in their villages and with their families during the hostilities. They are therefore best described as part-time soldiers with other professions on the side. In Afghanistan, for example, most combatants were farmers, shopkeepers and nomads who only fought when called upon (WB, 2001:42; Özerdem, 2002:971). It is in armed conflicts where the armed groups are clearly tied to certain geographical areas and mainly seek to defend these, where this is possible. Since these stationary groups are already part of civil society, reintegration is usually less troublesome. It may even be sufficient simply to organise a disarmament and demobilisation process (Seminar at Sida, Dec. 7, 2004). In such situations, the giving of reintegration assistance sometimes creates a “reintegration problem” which was previously non-existent. In Guatemala, for example, the Civil Defense Patrol (CDP) — a 360,000 strong paramilitary force — was disbanded without compensation in 1996. When the government several years later began discussing the issue of reintegration assistance, in a bid to increase its popularity, 1 million individuals claimed affiliation with the CDP (Steenken & Thorgren, Nov. 24, 2004; *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Sept. 1997:15).

*Focus for development co-operation:* It is important that ex-guerrillas are politically reintegrated and that their physical security is ensured. Assistance to ex-guerrillas who belonged to material- and coercion-based groups should focus on giving material benefits. This may be insufficient for ex-guerrillas of identity-based groups. They may need access to land, education and political power. It can be enough to disarm and demobilise combatants that belonged to armed groups that were stationary during the hostilities.

## 8.5 Rural or Urban Environment

Experience has shown that reintegration tends to be easier in rural than in urban environments. Three main factors explain this phenomenon. First, ex-combatants returning to rural areas usually receive more support from local communities, relatives and families (WB, 2001:58-9; Kingma, 2000c:221). Second, it is easier to absorb unqualified labour in rural environments than in urban ones. The labour market in large cities tends to be more complex. This makes it difficult for ex-combatants, who generally have few skills and little education, to find gainful employment in urban centres (WB, 2001:54; Kingma, 2000c:230, 233). Finally, the social and economic differences between ex-combatants and the receiving community tend to be fewer in rural environments (Kingma, 2000c:221; Lundin, 1998:109). The relative ease in which ex-combatants assimilate into rural environments makes it preferable to find ways to reintegrate those with rural backgrounds into the countryside. Ex-combatants who come from the countryside are, however, often reluctant to return to their old homes and prefer to settle in cities. It may therefore be necessary to create incentives for them to return to their local communities (*Disarmament...*, 2004:74; Nübler, 2000:69).

Support of local reconciliation seems to be especially important when ex-combatants return to rural areas (WB, 2001:52). This is due to ex-combatants' dependency on the goodwill and social support of their families, relatives, and receiving communities. This is yet another reason for donors to assist in community sensitisation efforts, family reunification, and cleansing rituals in rural settings (see also Chapter 6.1).

Access to land is the most important factor for the successful reintegration of ex-combatants in rural areas. Demobilised soldiers and guerrillas are, however, usually only a small portion of those needing land for cultivation in post-war societies. Other groups in need of land are returning refugees and internally displaced people as well as poor landless segments of the population. Issues such as land redistribution and determining land ownership can

therefore not be settled within the limited framework of a DD&R process but require government initiatives at the national level. Even when land reforms are stipulated in peace agreements, their implementation is often delayed due to the sensitiveness of the question. Delayed land reforms for ex-combatants have created tensions in El Salvador and Zimbabwe. Any land reforms must therefore be well-planned and supported by all stakeholders. In those situations where it is not possible for ex-combatants to receive their own land, it is especially important to assist in local reconciliation. It is namely not uncommon for ex-combatants who are accepted by their families and communities to be welcomed as farm workers or even given a small plot of land to cultivate (Spear, 2002:150; WB, 2001:52; *Disarmament...*, 2004:80-81).

For those ex-combatants engaging in agriculture, it is helpful if they receive seeds, tools, animals, credit schemes, and food to cover the period up until the first harvest and agricultural training. Enrolment into rural entrepreneurship training may also be useful. Such schemes may create incentives for ex-combatants to choose to resettle in rural areas. The provision of permanent housing may be an additional benefit that can keep ex-combatants from moving to overpopulated cities (WB, 2001:53; *Disarmament...*, 2004:80-81; *Liberian...*, 2003:34, 56; Nübler, 2000:69).

A central problem for ex-combatants settling in urban environments tends to be their lack of skills and education, making it difficult for them to compete on the labour market (Kingma, 2000c:233). One remedy is, therefore, to give ex-combatants access to different sorts of education and training (WB, 2001:54). It is, however, often difficult for ex-combatants to find employment in the formal sector. Supporting apprenticeships in the informal sector and giving credits and business training that can help ex-combatants become self-employed is one remedy (WB, 2001:54; Lundin, 1998:110). It may, to a limited degree, be possible for donors and national governments to fund the employment of ex-combatants. This can be in the public sector, such as the police force, through job

creation programmes in co-operation with the private sector or through public schemes. Labour-intensive public works, such as in construction and infrastructure, may be especially suitable since limited skills are required (WB, 2001:54).

*Focus for development co-operation:* Ex-combatants of rural origin should be given incentives to return to their local communities. Assistance in rural areas should focus on local reconciliation and giving ex-combatants access to land. Any land reforms must be initiated by the national government and include all stakeholders. Assistance in urban environments should focus on providing training and education. Supporting apprenticeships, devising credit schemes, and providing business training is important. Labour-intensive public works in construction and infrastructure can offer many ex-combatants in urban environments valuable employment.



# 9 National Ownership

Observers have identified four main benefits of national ownership over a reintegration process. It is, first, a question of democratising development. By involving those in need of development, they have the possibility to influence decisions affecting them. Second, for reintegration to be as effective as possible, it is necessary to take local customs, traditions, and circumstances into consideration (Lundin, 1998). This is best done by involving local actors. Third, local governments and communities and ex-combatants know best what forms of assistance they need. Finally, too much involvement by external actors can affect the sustainability of the reintegration process (Kingma, 2000c:41).

In most DD&R processes, donors stress the need for national ownership over the planning and implementation of reintegration efforts. To guarantee national ownership, it is held that DD&R processes should be planned and implemented by local state institutions and local NGOs with the assistance of the international community. A temporary civil institution is usually created by the national government to deal with issues relating to DD&R. Due to the sensitiveness of the question, it is often argued that it is imperative that the body is considered neutral and technical. However, despite grand words of national ownership, it is rather common for donors to impose their own views on what assistance should be provided and how (UN, 1999:6; WB, 2001:65, 67).

Creating national institutions for DD&R processes is not enough. Ownership should be seen as operating on three different levels, where all levels are involved: the national level, the local community level, and the level of the ex-combatants themselves. Certain questions must be dealt with at the national level by institutions in charge of DD&R-related questions. These especially concern general guidelines and the rights and obligations of demobilised combatants. Involving the local community and local NGOs is a must, since reintegration is only possible with the co-operation and acceptance of those who will be interacting with the ex-combatants on a day-to-day basis (WB, 2001:67). To date, it has proven difficult to sponsor ownership at the local level. The capacity of local NGOs is seldom sufficient to implement reintegration programmes. The consequence has been that foreign NGOs act as implementers at the local level, whereby ownership only exists at the national level (Seminar at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sept. 10, 2004). Finally, it is crucial to involve ex-combatants in the planning and implementation phases, since they are the ones who will be most affected. Failing to do so may alienate them, which may at worst lead to violence.

Even though national ownership is preferable, experience has shown that delegating reintegration processes to national actors can be problematic. Reintegration is never just a technical, neutral, and apolitical process. It is always political, involving several actors and interests. High stakes are involved, especially for the former warring parties and their members. Failure to realise this has, for example, resulted in a lack of legitimacy for DD&R processes in the Great Lakes region. Important stakeholders have been excluded from the DD&R processes whereby ownership has been governmental rather than national (Lafrenière & O'Callaghan, Nov. 30, 2004; Dikongue-Atangana, Nov. 30, 2004). In the Republic of Congo this has led to former guerrillas being discriminated against. The existence of such discrimination can seriously undermine the legitimacy of the peace process. When donors delegate ownership to national governments, there should

be mechanisms that hinder the systematic discrimination of certain categories of ex-combatants. There are mainly two ways to ensure this. First, if neutral and technical national bodies are created to plan and oversee the implementation of reintegration processes, donors must retain some sort of veto power to ensure that members of one warring party are not marginalised. The second alternative is to avoid having neutral and technical institutes and instead create bodies where all political interests are represented. This sets up a system of checks and balances and hopefully guarantees that no parties are sidelined.

National ownership constitutes a specific problem in extremely weak states that lack functioning state institutions and infrastructure. It is common that donors refuse to give assistance until receiving governments present a detailed national plan for the DD&R process. Since many governments do not have the resources to draw up a proper plan quickly — much less implement a full DD&R process — it is not uncommon that DD&R initiatives are severely delayed and poorly implemented. This has been the experience in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea-Bissau (Seminar at Sida, Dec. 7, 2004). Under such circumstances, it may be necessary for donors to take a greater responsibility in assisting in the planning, monitoring, co-ordination and implementation of reintegration processes together with local stakeholders.

*Focus for development co-operation:* National ownership should never be equated with governmental ownership. Donors should take measures to ensure that all stakeholders are included and that there are mechanisms to hinder the systematic discrimination of certain ex-combatants. Ownership should also be delegated to local communities and the ex-combatants themselves. Donors must take a greater responsibility in assisting in the planning, monitoring, co-ordination, and implementation of reintegration programmes in extremely weak states that lack functioning state institutions and infrastructure.

# 10 When Should Reintegration Assistance End?

Reintegration assistance is a temporary solution that aims to give different forms of help to ex-combatants and their families until they are economically, politically, and socially assimilated into civil society. In the short-term, demobilised combatants may need special assistance to survive, to reconcile themselves with society, and to abstain from engaging in violence. The aim should, however, be that this assistance is as short-term as possible or that it quickly becomes integrated into more long-term development strategies aimed at a wider target group. This is, first of all, to prevent societal tensions that may arise if ex-combatants are seen as receiving special benefits. Giving assistance for too long a time can, second, create a situation of dependence where ex-combatants do not become self-sufficient. It may, at worst, lead to ex-combatants seeking to keep the “reintegration problem” alive in order to continue receiving support. It is therefore essential to determine when the moment is ‘ripe’ to withdraw this temporary assistance.

Most reintegration programmes last 1—3 years. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2—3 years is the minimum amount of time a reintegration programme needs to be successful, while another 3—5 years is necessary to allow a full evaluation to be made (Berdal, 1996:8). According to the ILO’s estimations, it is therefore first after 5-8 years that it is possible to judge whether ex-combatants have been successfully

reintegrated. Considering that former combatants often lack jobs 10 years after demobilisation, two things become clear. First, the time span of most current programmes is too short to ensure full economic, political and social assimilation. Second, it is difficult to assess the exact amount of time needed to ensure reintegration, especially since there is likely to be a great variation between different categories of ex-combatants and the environments they reintegrate into. The time span of reintegration programmes must therefore be context sensitive. This is seldom the case today, as most programmes strictly follow a clear time-frame (Dikongue-Atangana, Nov. 30, 2004).

Until when then should reintegration assistance be given? When is the moment ripe for withdrawing support? Since the overall aim of giving assistance is to ensure that ex-combatants and their families are economically, politically, and socially assimilated into civil society, assistance should not end until this has been attained. It is therefore necessary to support reintegration processes until the households of ex-combatants are self-sufficient through production or gainful employment, they become part of the decision-making process, and they are accepted by their receiving communities. Without economic, political, and social assimilation there is an overwhelming risk that ex-combatants will be unable to support themselves and will not have been reconciled with the civilian population. Lack of reintegration may, furthermore, create incentives to re-engage in violence. In other words, if they are not fully assimilated the original reason for giving assistance probably still exists.

The goal of achieving social assimilation touches upon the question of the identities of ex-combatants and the resilience of military structures after demobilisation. Does social assimilation require ex-combatants to lose their identity as former combatants and is it necessary to destroy informal military structures that continue to exist? First, many are of the opinion that ex-combatants should lose their identity as former combatants. Ex-combatants' wartime experiences and life situations are not, however, likely to be conducive to such a change. Former

combatants often continue to relive their war traumas and experiences long after demobilisation. Many ex-combatants also feel a sense of pride and accomplishment because of the sacrifices they made during the hostilities; 30—40 years after liberation, war veterans in some Third World countries still have a strong sense of pride and receive much societal respect. After demobilisation, combatants, furthermore, often continue to spend time with each other. In some instances the social bonds between ex-combatants even become their main support network (*Disarmament...*, 2004:71, 78). Trying to erase their identities as ex-combatants is therefore likely to be futile. Even if such a transformation is possible, it is questionable whether it is desirable, as the comradeship between ex-combatants is sometimes the only social forum at their disposal.

It is, second, not uncommon that parts of the armed groups' command structure survive demobilisation. In Liberia, for example, it has been observed that commanders continued to have influence over their former subordinates during peacetime (Utas, 2003:245-46). The traditional view has been that such structures are undesirable and should be destroyed since they can easily be used for remobilisation (Spear, 2002:141). This view has, however, been challenged by those who argue that the structures can be useful when reintegrating ex-combatants. In Liberia, groups of young ex-combatants used the former military command structures to their advantage when engaging in the brick-making industry. The organisational capacity and discipline of their networks increased their competitiveness (Utas, 2003:247-49). At this point, little is known about whether one should actively use or seek to break up such networks. What can be said is that such structures in themselves are unlikely to have either positive or negative effects. What is important is what values and objectives the members of such networks possess.

*Focus for development co-operation:* Targeted assistance should be as short-term as possible or quickly be integrated into broader development strategies. Assistance should cease when ex-combatants and their families are economically, politically, and socially assimilated into civil society;

in other words, when the households of ex-combatants are self-sufficient through production or gainful employment, when they become part of the decision-making process, and when they are accepted by their receiving communities.

# 11 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations<sup>17</sup>

The aim of this study has been to 1) enhance our knowledge of different definitions of reintegration, 2) investigate what theories there are that explain when reintegration tends to be successful, and 3) seek to make reintegration efforts more effective by taking existing theoretical knowledge into consideration and learning from practical experiences.

To recall, when warring parties are demobilised and ex-combatants are released into civilian life, society is faced with three main challenges: a) ex-combatants often pose a threat to post-war security, b) the atrocities that ex-combatants may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts and c) certain groups of weak and marginalised ex-combatants may need special assistance for humanitarian reasons. If these challenges — especially the security threat that former combatants pose — are not taken seriously, ex-combatants may re-engage in violence and render post-war reconstruction and peace building impossible. To deal with these challenges, donors have developed so-called *reintegration programmes*. However, even if there has been a growing interest amongst donors and academics in the past 15 years in how to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants, the exact meaning of the concept reintegration is still vague. Based on an inventory of different definitions, this study argues that reintegration should be seen as *a societal process aiming at the economic, political, and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their fami-*



*lies into civil society.* The main advantage of this definition is that it includes the political assimilation of ex-combatants, something which is missing in many current definitions. Reintegration is a highly political process. Failing to realise this may result in certain categories or groups of ex-combatants being discriminated against, creating severe tensions in the post-conflict period. Furthermore if ex-combatants cannot influence decisions affecting them, they may have incentives to reengage in violence.

The research dealing with the reintegration of former combatants is still underdeveloped. There are, at present, no theories that explain under which circumstances reintegration tends to be successful. Instead, there are statements and assumptions about what is believed to hinder ex-combatants from re-engaging in different sorts of violence. Even though these statements are not founded on scientific research, they are of interest because they are based on actual experiences of trying to reintegrate ex-combatants. These assumptions all revolve around three central themes: a) the need to find peacetime *substitutes* for the benefits of war, b) the need to *heal* the wounds of war, and c) the need to deal with *contextual factors* that make reintegration more difficult.

Based on our practical and albeit limited theoretical knowledge, more concrete recommendations have been made for how donors can support different reintegration processes in post-conflict societies. In the following, the most essential of these recommendations are presented.

- I. *When should reintegration assistance be given?* Targeted support to ex-combatants is only warranted if a) they constitute a security threat to the new peace order, b) the atrocities that they may have committed can create conflict-generating rifts in society, or c) certain categories of ex-combatants cannot support themselves due to economic, political, or social marginalisation. This is often the case for female ex-combatants and child soldiers.
- II. *When should reintegration assistance not be given?* The giving of assistance should be avoided when a) there is no peace agreement solving or regulating the

incompatibility of the warring parties, b) there is no political will among the belligerents to abide by the peace accord, or c) there is a continued high level of violence, despite the signing of a peace agreement, whereby combatants may fear for their security as they become civilians.

- III. *What forms should reintegration assistance take?* To deal with the challenges posed by ex-combatants donors should focus on a) finding ways to *substitute* the benefits of war with benefits of peace and b) *healing* the wounds of war.
- IV. *Finding substitutes for the benefits of war.* There are four areas in which development co-operation must find peacetime substitutes for the benefits of war. First, as combatants become civilians, their physical security must be ensured. Second, there must be legal economic opportunities for demobilised combatants so that they can support themselves and their families. Third, ex-combatants must be able to influence decisions affecting them, and fourth, it is important to ensure that ex-combatants do not lose the societal prestige they gained during the conflict. Of these four, the first three are the most central to address, as it can be difficult to safeguard the prestige of ex-combatants without making reconciliation more difficult. Points V—VII below deal with these first three issues in more detail.
- V. *Ensuring the physical security of ex-combatants.* This is best done by supporting security sector reform; especially by ensuring that the national police resume responsibility for internal security and that there is civilian and democratic control over the armed forces. It can also be wise to support limited military mergers whereby all former warring parties have some representation in the national army. However, donor countries can currently not use development co-operation funds for the military sector as this kind of support is not classified as Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the OECD-DAC. Consequently, support for military mergers must come from other sources.

- VI. *Ensuring the economic security of ex-combatants.* Most ex-combatants end up in the informal sector. Former combatants may therefore need basic knowledge of market structures, accounting, and management and access to credit schemes and apprenticeships or on-the-job training. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training have proven more effective than vocational training and should therefore be prioritised. Creating employment opportunities in construction or the rehabilitation of infrastructure is also recommended.
- VII. *Ensuring the political influence of ex-combatants.* Ex-combatants should be involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of reintegration programmes. One way of doing this is to involve and support veterans' organisations. Support to veterans' organisations should, however, only be seen as a temporary solution. In the long run it is better to encourage ex-combatants to participate in politics as normal civilians. Aid can also be given to assist the transformation of warring parties into political parties.
- VIII. *Healing the wounds of war.* Supporting societal reconciliation and individual trauma healing is the best way to do this. Donors should focus on assisting reconciliation at the community level. Initiating sensitisation campaigns and helping in the organisation of public healing ceremonies and traditional cleansing rituals can do this. It is also important that ex-combatants and receiving communities share a sense of a common future. Assistance to ex-combatants must therefore be seen as making a contribution to the whole community. Reconciliation may necessitate bringing those who have committed the most serious abuses to justice. To mitigate the war traumas of ex-combatants, development co-operation should support the ability of local communities to deal with such traumas. Promoting community-based mental health treatment services and ensuring that ex-combatants have access to forums for counselling are appropriate strategies.

- IX. *Dangers of exclusively targeting ex-combatants.* Reintegration assistance that only benefits demobilised combatants should, when possible, be avoided. Such aid can create resentment from the local population, making social assimilation more difficult. Donors should therefore seek to incorporate assistance to ex-combatants into more broad-based development projects. If this is not possible, it is essential that receiving communities are at least given some assistance.
- X. *Ex-combatants — a heterogeneous group.* Demobilised combatants cannot be treated as a homogenous group. Distinctions should be made between different categories, and the needs of each one must be established for successful reintegration. For example, it matters whether ex-combatants belonged to the government or the rebel side, to stationary or to mobile groups, and to guerrilla groups that were material- and coercion-based or identity based. The military rank of ex-combatants is also important. Special attention must be given to middle- and high-ranking officers. It is particularly important to focus on vulnerable groups such as female ex-combatants and child soldiers. They need separate and discrete DD&R processes, with the possibility of receiving retroactive reintegration assistance.
- XI. *Reintegration into rural or urban environments.* Reintegration is easier to achieve in rural environments. There should therefore be special incentives to lure those ex-combatants with a rural origin back to their local communities. Assistance in rural areas should focus on local reconciliation and giving ex-combatants access to land. Land reforms must, however, be initiated by the national government and include all stakeholders. Assistance in urban environments should focus on providing training and education. Supporting apprenticeships or on-the-job training and initiating credit schemes and business training is important. Labour-intensive public works in construction and infrastructure can offer many

ex-combatants in urban environments valuable employment.

XII. *Cost-efficiency.* Implementing reintegration strategies usually means matching scarce resources to massive needs. This necessitates co-ordination between donors and with local actors around a shared strategy that will ensure cost-efficiency. When planning reintegration assistance it is important to keep three things in mind: a) much reintegration work can be done in the local communities without external support. Ex-combatants who belonged to armed groups that were stationary and had high social capital will normally need less targeted external assistance. For these groups, disarmament and demobilisation may be sufficient. Similarly, reconciliation through healing rituals in rural communities can be achieved without much external support. b) Preference should be given to reintegration programmes that are based on proper market studies and are demand-driven. c) Programmes that address several problems simultaneously should be prioritised. Apprenticeships and on-the-job training, for example, not only have an economic dimension but contribute to social empowerment and reconciliation. Incorporating ex-combatants into the national police not only gives them a steady income but also offers a substitute for the societal prestige of being a combatant, increases their sense of physical security, and strengthens the weakness of the state by reducing the security vacuum.

XIII. *Contextual factors that make reintegration more difficult.* When planning reintegration assistance, donors must be aware of certain contextual factors that may lure ex-combatants back to different sorts of violence. These include a) the existence of armed groups standing outside the peace process — so-called spoilers — or groups fighting wars in neighbouring countries, b) access to natural resources that are easy to loot, so-called spoils, c) the availability of arms in society, and d) security vacuums

in weak and war-torn states. The effects of these factors can be mitigated by supporting healing and finding peacetime substitutes for the benefits of war, whereby ex-combatants will have fewer incentives to re-engage in violence. However, due to the magnitude of these factors, they are, except for failed disarmament, best dealt with outside the narrow mandates of most DD&R processes. These threats must instead be handled by actors involved in the general process of peace implementation, nation building, and democratisation.

XIV. *National ownership.* National ownership should never be equated with governmental ownership. Donors should therefore take measures to ensure that all stakeholders are included and that there are mechanisms hindering the systematic discrimination of certain ex-combatants. Ownership should also be delegated to local communities and the ex-combatants themselves. National ownership constitutes a specific problem in extremely weak states that lack functioning state institutions and infrastructure. Under such circumstances, it may be necessary for donors to take a greater responsibility in assisting in the planning, monitoring, co-ordination, and implementation of reintegration programmes together with local stakeholders.

XV. *Exit strategy.* Targeted assistance to ex-combatants should be as short-term as possible or quickly be integrated into broader development strategies. This is necessary to prevent societal tensions that may arise if ex-combatants are seen as receiving special benefits. Giving assistance for too long a time can furthermore create a situation of dependence where ex-combatants do not become self-sufficient, at worst leading to ex-combatants seeking to keep the 'reintegration problem' alive. Assistance should therefore cease when ex-combatants and their families are economically, politically, and socially assimilated into civil society; in other words, when the households of ex-combatants are self-sufficient through

production or gainful employment, when they become part of the decision-making process, and when they are accepted by their receiving communities.

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