



Working Paper No. 3

October 2007



Ex-combatants in Burundi:

*Why they joined,
why they left,
how they fared*

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Peter Uvin



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Abbreviations

CNDD — Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy)

DDR — Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

FAB — Forces Armées du Burundi (Armed Forces of Burundi)

FBU — Franc Burundais (Burundian Franc)

FDD — Forces de Defense Nationales (National Defense Force)

FDN — Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (Forces for the Defense of Democracy)

FNL — Forces de libération nationale (National Liberation Forces)

IDP — Internally displaced persons

GP — Gardiens de la paix

IPA — International Peace Academy

MC — Militants-combattants

MDRP — Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program

NGO — Non-Governmental Organization

PMPA — Partis et Mouvements Politiques Armés (Armed Political Parties and Movements)

PNDRR — Programme National de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration - National Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Reintegration Program

SE/CNDRR — Secrétariat exécutif de la Commission nationale de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration (Executive Secretariat of the National Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Reintegration Commission)

SNES — Structure nationale pour les enfants soldats (National Structure for Child Soldiers)

Introduction

This report presents some findings about ex-combatants that are derived from a wider study on masculinity and youth, partly sponsored by the World Bank's Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP).¹ This study involved almost 400 Burundians from all walks of life, with whom I had lengthy conversations about questions of development, peace, the future, their plans for themselves and their children, and just life in general. Among those interviewed, there were 63 ex-combatants. I pulled these results out and present them here separately in an attempt to gain a better understanding of who these people are and how their return to their communities has proceeded. This report will focus mainly on the "reintegration" part of the DDR program—not the "DD" parts, which had taken place (or not) long before I arrived. Evidently, this is a small sample of the entire MDRP target group of more than 20,000 ex-combatants nationwide. The results presented here, thus, are mainly indicative of the specific places I worked in; more substantial research is required to test their validity on a larger scale.

This research took place in three rural communes—Busiga and Ruhororo in the Northern Ngozi province and Nyanza-Lac in the South—and throughout the city of Bujumbura. I had chosen Busiga because it was a commune that had been little touched by the war: there were almost no pogroms there in 1993, no IDP camps, few refugees. The situation could not be more different in Ruhororo, a mere 10 miles down the road. There had been a lot of internal violence in this commune in 1993, and one of the largest IDP camps had formed there right away. At the time of my research, it was still there, maybe the largest in all of Burundi, and I did a lot of interviews in that camp. Nyanza-Lac, finally, is the commune with the highest number of repatriated refugees in

Burundi. More generally, this area was almost entirely depopulated during the war. It has seen enormous return movements in the last few years, in part because it is a more economically rich and diverse area than the two Northern communes. Bujumbura was chosen because it is the country's major city. I worked mainly in two of its poorest neighborhoods: Kamenge and Musaga, which have been for more than a decade, since the ethnic cleansing that hit Bujumbura, mono-ethnically Hutu and Tutsi respectively. I also interviewed some ex-combatants in other neighborhoods, mainly in an attempt to talk to some demobilized former Burundian Army (FAB) officers as well as some self-demobilized ex-FNL rebels. I interviewed ex-combatants from the FAB, CNDD/FDD (the party currently in power), CNDD-Nyangoma (the wing of the founder of the CNDD, mostly strong in the south of the country), Kaze-FDD (another split-off of the CNDD), and the FNL (still fighting during the interviews, so I only talked to self-demobilized from this group).

Burundi's PNDRR (*Programme National de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration - National Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Reintegration Program*) began in March 2004, and is executed by the *Secrétariat exécutif de la Commission nationale de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration - Executive Secretariat of the National Demobilization, Reinsertion, and Reintegration Commission* (SE/CNDRR). This was the result of years of difficult negotiation by the parties to the Pretoria agreement, assisted by a small Bank team (for a history of the steps and challenges, see Alusala 2005). It is a nation-wide program designed to help with the demobilization of up to 55,000 ex-combatants.

The child soldier segment (i.e., dealing with all combatants aged 18 and below at the time of demobilization) began in 2003. It was managed by UNICEF and the *Structure nationale pour les enfants soldats - National Structure for Child Soldiers* (SNES)

¹ Detailed comments have been received from Leanne Bayer, Joseph Bigirumwami, Kim Howe, Phil Lancaster, Estella Malayika, Ingo Wiederhofer, Kees Kingma, and foremost Adrien Tuyaga, my main research assistant and intellectual companion in writing this paper. I thank all of them. I also got help from Madjior Solness Dingamadji in the Bujumbura office of the World Bank, as well as from Sigrun Aasland in the Bank office in Washington DC. I presented these results to a workshop in Bujumbura organized by CENAP and the North-South Institute in Dec. 2006, as well as a presentation at the World Bank in Jan. 2007. I thank all those who participated for their comments. As usual, all of this engages only me, and all errors are mine only.

Introduction

and sub-contracted much of the execution to ten provincial partners—NGOs, church agencies, etc. This UNICEF-managed program provided support to 3,015 child soldiers and was completed in June 2006. Since then, child soldier programming has been incorporated within the SE/CNDRR, which is undertaking continued follow-up of existing beneficiaries and supporting the demobilization and reintegration of children associated with the FNL.

The adult demobilization program consists of two parts. In a first phase, immediately after demobilization, ex-combatants receive reinsertion payments. These payments vary by rank, with anyone above the rank of corporal receiving more than FBU 600,000; the minimum is FBU 566,000 per person (paid in 4 cash installments over 10 months). At the end of this period—and this is just starting now for most of the country—the demobilized receive reintegration assistance in the form of training, equipment, and other inputs to support the development of a livelihood or an income generating activity, for a value of 600,000 FBU. Training is provided by accredited educational and training institutions and support to develop income generating opportunities is provided through NGOs subcontracted by the government.

There are possibilities for health care for people with serious needs and specialized assistance for handicapped and infirm soldiers. Smaller programs are also in place for *Gardiens de la Paix* (GP—local militias working for the army, in charge of self-defense in their communities) and *militants-combattants* (MC—those supporting rebels but not part of their formal troops). By the summer of 2006, the operations for the latter two groups were finished: 18,709 GP and 9,674 MC had received what are called “allocations de reconnaissance de service”—one-time recognition of service allowances. The program will also support the demobilization and reintegration of FNL combatants when a formal peace agreement is reached.

It must be noted that the research on which this report draws was not designed to be an evaluation of the MDRP or PNDRR programs. For that reason, there may be gaps here—issues any program manager would have liked to see addressed but which I did not deal with in my conversations. My general aim was simply to

understand how people in post-conflict Burundi—and foremost young people, and especially young men—live their lives, what they dream of, what problems they encounter and what opportunities they see, and how they relate to each other. In so doing, I happened to talk to many ex-combatants. The following will give the reader an idea of their lives.

Annex 1 lists key data for all 63 ex-combatants I interviewed. Annex 2 discusses the qualities of my sample. Generally, the ex-combatants I spoke to are rather representative in age, political movement, educational level, and gender of the national PNDRR cohort. I slightly over-sampled on child soldiers and, in Kamenge, on self-demobilized soldiers. Generally, the fit of my sample is better for rural than for urban areas.

Part 1: A Profile of Ex-Combatants

I. At what age did they join?

The child soldiers I interviewed joined at ages 9-14. Many of the adult ex-combatants were recruited at the same age. In other words, the only thing that set child soldiers apart from their adult colleagues is that they had not yet turned 19 or more. The average age of joining for the two ex-FAB's is 12.5 years; for the 4 ex-CNDD/FDD's, it is 11.

For the demobilized (adult) soldiers, there is more variation. Some were career FAB soldiers: they had all joined in their early 20s, long before the war. The age of those who were recruited *during the war* was much lower. More than half were children as well: on the average they were 16 when recruited by the FAB; 13 by the CNDD/FDD; and 14 by the FNL. The ones recruited in Bujumbura city, with one exception, were all minors (average age 17 at age of recruitment). The same holds for the self-demobilized soldiers from all three the main parties to the war. Only two out of 21 were adults when they joined: for the others, the average age was 14.4 years. A few were still minors when they quit their military outfits as well.

I should explain here what I mean by self-demobilized soldiers. They are combatants from all of the main armed movements—in my sample: FAB, CNDD/FDD and FNL—who quit their troops before being demobilized. Sometimes they did so with acknowledgment of their superior (they were blatantly going crazy or had suffered enough, and they got some pants, a T-shirt, and a 1,000 francs bill and were told to make themselves scarce) but more often they simply ran away, without warning anyone. From a military perspective, that makes them all deserters. They feared they might be imprisoned or killed or forced to re-enlist. As a result, until this day,

many of them are afraid and in hiding (people told me there were “thousands” of them, but I possess no more specific figures). They do not receive benefits from the DDR program as they were not formally registered as ex-combatants, and, indeed, many even well-informed Burundians are not aware of their existence.

To conclude the discussion of age: my sample indicates three major trends. First, there is no doubt that the war in Burundi was fought with children. With the exception of the FAB career soldiers and a few CNDD (all factions) soldiers in Nyanza-Lac, the large majority of people recruited during the war, for all armed groups, were minors when they were recruited, and many were very, very young. Admittedly, I interviewed only one ex-CNDD officer—a chef de police in one of my Northern communes. I presume that most of the CNDD officers have been integrated in the army or the police, and hence do not appear in a study of demobilized soldiers. Adding them in would have also increased the average age of CNDD soldiers recruited during the war.

Second, in my sample, a greater proportion of young men who were very young when they were recruited were from the city. Experts tell me that the majority of those who were very young at recruitment were rural (although they may have ended up in the city afterwards), so my urban interview sample may not be entirely representative. Most urban youth in my sample were recruited soon after leaving school because of the war (a result also found by Taylor 2006: 5, and which also holds in the countryside), and/or after fleeing.

Third, with two exceptions all the self-demobilized started as child soldiers. They stayed for many years in their respective military outfits: as much as 10 years, and quite a few in the 5-8 year range; only two of the 21 in my sample stayed less than 3 years. In my sample, they actually spent on the average as many if not slightly more years fighting than did the officially recognized

ex-combatants. For many of them, their only mistake is that they had enough of killing and dying before they were allowed to by their superiors.

Not surprisingly, all these ex-combatants (with the exception of FAB career soldiers) have low educational levels and carry with them a legacy of low educational attainment. However, this legacy is less dramatic than may appear at first. The differences with non-combatant civilians their age are generally not enormous (see too Tatoui-Cherif 2006: 25), for the large majority of poor people in Burundi suffered from low access to education during the war. At the same time, our general interviews clearly reveal that education is only useful if one reaches at least 10th grade. Whether one has 4 years of education while others have 6 years does not really make that much of a difference to an ordinary Burundian's life—you remain on the farm or in the informal sector regardless. The individual economic benefits of education only kick in if people reach the high school diploma, or at least tenth grade, when the doors to the civil service and the private sector open. That may also explain why enrolling in education has not been not a choice many demobilized soldiers, young or adult, have made.

II. Why they joined the war

Eight of our 63 ex-combatant interviewees were FAB career soldiers, who had on average 15-20 years in the army behind them. They evidently did not join the army because of the war. We will thus not discuss them in this section. All other ex-combatants we interviewed joined during the war. What did they tell us about their reasons for joining?

We heard four types of arguments from ex-combatants as to why they went to fight during Burundi's civil war. The three most important ones, more or less equally frequent, are: insecurity and anger; an ideological agenda; and poverty. Far behind, a fourth answer was offered as well, namely force. The attractiveness of a military career was mentioned by only 1 out of 63 persons, and many more people told us the opposite².

A. Insecurity and anger

This argumentation presents ex-combatants as joining against their will, essentially forced by circumstances. It is not ideology that drove them, but insecurity, fear, and anger at the killings of those close to them (see too Lancaster 2006: 15 for child soldiers, as well as Taylor 2006: 6). *They joined the war because there was a war*—they did not create it, but reacted to it.

- 19 years old in Ruhororo IDP camp: “After multiple rebel attacks on the site, I followed the regular army when I was 14, because the young people were not killed, but were taken hostage by the rebels. I decided that life here was too hard, and that one risked to die at any moment. Joining the FAB was, for me, a way to escape.”
- 26 year old, Kamenge: “I decided to fight because my family and I and my neighborhood suffered a lot. We were often attacked and ill-treated by the army. Then we fled to Congo, and there too we had many problems every day, so I decided to join the front.”
- 23 year old barber, Kamenge: “I fled the fighting and killing here in Bujumbura to go live with the family of my father's second wife in the interior and there, there were problems too so I decided to follow a group of friends to Kibira forest [where the CNDD/FDD had its headquarters] to be recruited, hoping for more security in an armed group compared to a village. I had no choice, it was like a refuge for me, but there was of course also the ethnic aspect.”
- 21 year old unemployed man, Kamenge: “My parents both died during counter operations by the FAB in 1999. It happened while we were fleeing. After my period of mourning, I decided to join the rebellion (FNL) and fight back. (...) It was the anger of the death of my parents that got me recruited, but once there, there were promises that we would be better off after the war.”

²Lancaster 2006:9 synthesizes the causes of child recruitment into government forces as investigated by himself in 2002: “poverty, displacement, loss of parents, hunger, search for status, peer pressure, and desire for revenge were all cited as common causes of voluntary recruitment for all categories of child soldiers.” Most of this is found back in this research, with the exception of search for status and peer pressure

In rural areas, these people often joined later, towards the end of the 1990s. In urban areas, however, this was not the case. Why the difference? After all, people in many rural areas were hit by waves of violence very early as well. Ruhororo's IDP camp itself, for example, came into being right away in late 1993—even before people had to flee from Kamenge and the other city neighborhoods. Why, then, did those in Ruhororo camp join so late and those in the city so much earlier? The explanation seems likely to be a combination of factors: a) in the city, a general sense of insecurity had already begin growing since the early 1990s, with widespread ethnic propaganda and rising tensions since the launch of democracy and multi-partyism; b) people in the city are more easily recruited, as they are closer together and as political leaders, who organize and finance the recruiting, typically live in Bujumbura city; and c) young people in the city often feel they have less to lose, as they are often unemployed, unmarried, with nothing to lose.

B. Ideology

These are people who went to a fight because they believed in the cause. Many of them are older and joined early. In my interviews, they mainly come from Nyanza-Lac and from Bujumbura city and province, and they are exclusively Hutu. They fought because they were willing to sacrifice their lives—and the lives of others—for the cause. This holds also for children (see too Lancaster 2006: 14) The FNL soldiers we talked to, for example, all shared an extremely deep commitment to the cause: a combination of pro-Hutu ideology, religion, and discipline that seems steps above the other fighting forces. This may explain in part their holding out for so long, against such odds. Note that two of the three female ex-combatants I spoke to were self-demobilized FNL combatants who told me they joined voluntarily, because they shared this agenda—if “voluntary” is a term one can use for girls who were 12 and 13 years old when they joined.

- 28 year old farmer from Busiga, joined CNDD/FDD: “The communal administration persecuted people, and for that reason, I and many others joined the rebels”

- 56 year old farmer from Nyanza-Lac, joined CNDD/FDD: “after the assassination of the President, it was clear to me that there was no security for the president, so we needed to create it. Most of them came from different provinces in the country. Most knew the war of 1972, people then were killed without process: they just were taken to the slaughterhouse. They wanted to avoid that this happens again: this time they would not be carried away to the slaughterhouse passively—they would die fighting instead. They came from all milieus: those who had studied and those who had not. It was mostly Hutu, who were persecuted.”

- 17 year old girl, FNL self-demob: “I joined the FNL out of ideology. I saw that my community suffered a lot; it was the target of all *malheurs* and I couldn't tolerate so much injustice, I felt like a slave in my own country.”

C. Misery and the need for an income

A sizeable group explains their participation in the war by simple income reasons. They wanted to escape misery, or, more precisely, earn an income (see Taylor, Samii and Mvukiyehe 2006: 10 for a good discussion). The large majority of those who explicitly told us they joined for the money had joined the FAB—the only belligerent who actually paid salaries, at least in theory, as well as provided some health care, pensions etc. Most of them are urban as well.

- Unemployed man in his mid-20s from Musaga, ex-FAB: “My father died and my mother had no work. She could not pay our school fees or our food. I got myself recruited in the army to survive and earn some money.”
- 31 year old unemployed man from Musaga, ex-FAB: “I left school and I had a job as *rabatteur de bus*. In 1996 friends came to see me and told me they were hiring in the army. I did not hesitate because I hoped to earn more but I was disappointed because not only did I earn nothing but also I became handicapped at the right hand.”

- 35 years old unemployed man from Bwiza, ex-FAB: “From 1993 to 1995 it was civil war here and I passed my time in the neighborhood with the other young people of my generation, doing security rounds at night, talking during the day, and drinking and smoking [PU: this means he belonged to the infamous gangs of killers that ravaged the city for years]. In 1995, I registered for a technical school in accounting, but I had trouble paying the fees, so in 1996 I took and passed the recruitment exam for the army and was recruited as a low-rank officer. Me, I joined the army to earn money, it was not at all for ideological reasons. That is even the response I wrote down in the questionnaire they gave me before they hired me.”

This argument also finds some support in the quantitative data. Taking out the child soldiers, the largest cohort of ex-combatants by far (15 persons) is composed of people who made it to 6th grade, and in all likelihood failed to make it to secondary school. For thousands of youth in Burundi, at that point, the doors to a better future close brutally, and it seems not surprising that there is a spike in enrollment at this moment of closure and desperation.

D. Force

Force—people being abducted, forced to join—was mentioned surprisingly rarely, given the general association between force and child soldier recruitment that has come into being in scholarly and policy discussions (see Lancaster 2006; Taylor, Samii and Mvukiyeye 2006: 7 for other studies that confirm this). Three persons in our sample claimed they were forced to join: a woman interviewed in Nyanza-Lac (now married to another ex-combatant), a young man, and a child soldier, taken at night, together with his brother, at the age of 9. In our sample, all these forced recruitments were by the CNDD/FDD.

- 28 year old woman in Nyanza-Lac, ex CNDD/FDD: “I did not go voluntarily into the maquis: I was forced to follow them when they attacked my native colline. If not, I would not have wanted a military career. I was maltreated and almost died. Luckily, God protected me because afterwards they obliged us to undergo military training. I got used to that life

and ended up having two children with my husband who was also in the maquis.”

- 23 year old barman in Musaga: “while I was visiting my sister in Kayogoro during the holidays (I am from Rutana), I was abducted by the CNDD/FDD.”

One young man who spent 6 years with the FNL told us this in-between story:

- 20 year old mason’s aide, interviewed in Bwiza: “At night in the village I participated in the FNL sensitization meetings and also in their *ravitaillement*. One day while I participated in a *ravitaillement* with a group of other youth, the chefs showed us arms and ordered us take them, that these were from now on ours, and that we had to learn to fight like the others. It was a bit forced, but I was in agreement with the ideology of the liberation of Hutu.”

All the cases of forced recruitment in my sample are on the rebel side. This does not mean that force was absent in the behavior of the FAB, but only that it does not show up in our interviews. What does show up in many interviews with *non*-combatants is that they were forced to work for the FAB: bring water, cut wood, carry munitions and supplies, scout and spy, etc. Many people consider this one of the evils of the war they remember and want to talk about, always with much anger.

- 22 year old farmer from Nyanza-Lac: “during the war, you couldn’t exercise any activity. They took all the strong young men to transport munitions for the military of the FAB, but we did not get to go through the system of demobilization whether through UNICEF or another organization; it is the military themselves who sent us away for they no longer needed us.”
- 25 year old cook from Musaga; lived in an IDP camp for much of the war: “sometimes we were forced by the military to carry their munitions. If we refused we were beaten without mercy.”

It seems clear that the FAB did use force in getting people (especially youth) to work for it, but it did not typically recruit these people as full-time soldiers: it

kept them mostly outside. The rebels seemed to have followed a different strategy in this respect.

It is interesting to compare these results with Lancaster's (2006: 11-12) results from his interviews with FAB child soldiers in 2002:

The children saw the Army as their best hope of survival. As cycles of panic and flight separated families across the country, a number of children had no other choice but to beg protection from the Army. It must be understood here that as the state was torn apart, the only institution still functioning reasonably effectively was the Army. Consequently, it frequently found itself filling a rather large vacuum.

It is difficult to understand the level of vulnerability if one does not at least grasp the basic elements of life in Burundi. Most Burundians live from the produce of very small farms. Both ethnic groups lived on the small holdings of a few hectares scattered far and wide through mountainous terrain with only foot paths linking them. Lacking castles or fortified towns, the safest place to be during unsettled times was a military position, and the best way to be let in was to provide a service. The army's need for porters, servants, scouts, and spies created space for children needing protection and food.

My results in part confirm this analysis: many children did work for the FAB, while others joined to find security and/or income. However, the general tone of Lancaster's argument is more positive than mine. In my interviews, I heard many more people complain about the services they had to provide to the FAB, whereas Lancaster suggests these relations were more voluntary, mutually beneficial. There can be many reasons for that difference. It may be that, once the war is over, people in their interviews with me prefer to recall the past in different terms, presenting themselves more as unwilling victims; or, conversely, that while the war was ongoing and they still were part of the FAB, the people interviewed by Lancaster preferred to err at the side of safety and present things in a positive manner. There

³Lancaster 2006: 9 synthesizes the causes of child recruitment into government forces as investigated by himself in 2002: "poverty, displacement, loss of parents, hunger, search for status, peer pressure, and desire for revenge were all cited as common causes of voluntary recruitment for all categories of child soldiers." Most of this is found back in this research, with the exception of search for status and peer pressure.

is also a clear ethnic connotation to this issue. Tutsi generally did see the army as their protector, and hence doing tasks for the army, even if not entirely voluntary, was not as deeply resented as was the case for those Hutu who were obliged to do so. Maybe I spoke to more Hutu than did Lancaster.

E. Career and prestige

In the general literature on child soldiering, it is often argued that young men join rebel movements because of the machismo, the social prestige they derive from it. In my interviews, only one single person—a 30 year old ex-CNDD unemployed urban man—said he joined because he considered being a soldier a desirable or prestigious thing to do. Many more people explicitly told us the opposite, namely that they did *not* desire that career path. For example

- 32 year old farmer in Nyanza Lac: "my father died during the early war and I joined the troops that fought the army, something I'd never have thought of during my youth."
- 28 year old street shoe seller, Kamenge: "Before, I did not want to become a guerilla."
- 25 year old *rabatteur de bus*, Kamenge: "Before the election and the death of Ndadaye, my father had wanted for me to join the army, but I didn't want to."

Hence, the notion that soldiering attracts young men because it is a glamorous, masculine job is not borne out by our conversations³.

The story is very different for the 8 ex-FAB we spoke to who had joined the army *before* the war. A military career was clearly something people were proud of during the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these people had a high educational level—much higher than the people recruited during the war, and also much higher than their own parents: these men had clearly been upwardly mobile in their own lives (confirmed by Taylor 2006: 3 data).

This difference relates to a core dynamic of Burundi's

history. Indeed, in Burundi, as in many other countries, the army has been a crucial political, economic and social actor since shortly after independence. As so often, the accidents of colonialism created institutional legacies that were to influence political dynamics for decades to come. In Burundi, one of these accidents resides in the composition of the upper echelons of the army. During colonization, Tutsi were treated as superior by the colonial power: they got better access to education, which in turn allowed them access to positions within the state. Most of these positions accrued to Ganwa (royal princes, considered by many an ethnic group apart) and high-caste Tutsi, i.e. those with close links to the royal court and its administration. There were also lower-caste Tutsi—mostly Tutsi-Hima, herders from remoter provinces such as Bururi, Makamba and Mwaro—in Burundi. Historically, they could not give cows to the King nor propose their daughters for marriage to the Princes. They were Tutsi, but those at the court looked down on them. A large proportion of them, finding the doors to the administration closed off to them by the disdain of their higher-caste fellow Tutsi, ended up in the national army—a less prestigious choice, but still a major step up for rural boys. The 1966 *coup d'Etat* by Nkombero which overthrew the monarchy and the feeble democratic system then existing was thus a dramatic reversal of power within the Tutsi community, as the previously inferior, rural Tutsi-Hima suddenly became the rulers of the nation. Indeed, continuing intra-Tutsi enmities and fights for power determined a lot of Burundi's political evolution from then on.

And thus started a period of a few decades in which almost the entire top of the army—and of the nation's political system—was composed of former farm boys from Bururi. We forget what a dramatic change this was. It was by no means a continuation of a pre-colonial situation of Tutsi-dominated monarchy, as some would have it. Not only was the King gone, and with him the entire system of monarchical values and administrators that held the country together—but also was the country governed by an entirely new group of young military men who had grown up on the farm and made it to stunning positions of power and privilege. For all of them, the army was the key mechanism for their ascendance: not only was it the institution that maintained control over the territory, but also it was their entry into this army that brought them personally

access to power and privilege.

This was the case from the highest levels to the lowest levels. It is hard to imagine that people whose names are feared in Burundi— foremost Buyoya in this day and age, but also his predecessors Bagaza and Micombero, and the many other senior military men who held enormous power in the army and the state for decades— all started as regular rural boys, herding cows in the hills, running barefoot to little rural schools, imbued in the local traditions of Burundi's countryside. It was their entry into the army that brought them farther than their wildest dreams, to worlds of power and privilege, of travel and consumption their parents could not even envisage.

All the older FAB officers we spoke to fit this trajectory. Interestingly, about half of them indicated that the choice to become a military was made because they failed at school—the army was still a second best, then, compared to further studies. See for example the answer of an old, demobilized officer living in Bujumbura, to my social mobility question:

Yes, people change constantly of social category. A young student who gets to go to university, and a university graduate who gets his first job, both change social category. There are also those who fail at school and end up back in the field with their parents. Among them some manage to enter in the army or the police, or to do a small trade.

As much as a military career was a desirable one for young Tutsi men before the war—and very much in demand on the marriage market—this changed during the war. Suddenly, being a career soldier meant an enormous risk of being shot to pieces, of suffering badly in the field, of being involved in brutal human rights abuses.

The fact that nobody told me of the prestige associated with a military career runs counter to the scholarly literature on soldiering in Africa. After all, the argument goes, in societies where, because of widespread poverty and social exclusion, young men find it very hard to achieve manhood, to live according to the expectations of masculinity, joining armed groups is one way they can recapture a sense of prestige, of machismo, of

masculinity. Burundian men do not display any less of a sense of masculinity than other men anywhere in the world. Yet, they did not tell me about this in the conversations. It is true that this sort of argument is maybe not what they like to present to a stranger. It may not be clear even to themselves to what extent masculinity played a role, or they may not be proud of it. This factor, then, may be part of the complex mix of unconscious motives that brought young men to join, especially for those who chose soldiering as a way out of unemployment and poverty, but it seems unlikely, by itself, to have a strong explanatory value.

Yet recent literature on masculinity does exactly that: it generalizes far beyond what is acceptable. Even if authors add occasional words like “many” or “some” to their statements, and even if they at times make reference to positive dynamics, they still end up making general statements in which there seems to exist only one type of masculinity that seems to systematically lead to one type of violent, sexually predatory behavior⁴. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Burundi, too, the large majority of young men face pretty much the same problems in terms of frustrated masculinity; yet, ultimately, only a small minority among them (less than 3%) joined an armed movement during the war. The large majority of them chose so many paths during those tough years. What part of young men’s behavior, then, is explained by masculinity?

I recall here a conversation with Adrien Tuyaga, one of my colleagues, after I had told him about the concept of masculinity.

I think that masculinity is a general phenomenon that is common in our society. Yet, in its expression, its perception, its identity, its interpretation, when you seek it, when you grant it, when it is given to you, it is a very individual thing. By instinct of survival in the broadest sense, you adapt it to your personality, your direct context, your family environment and responsibilities, etc.

Take a village where you find the same security, economic and social situation, with the same needs, the same frustrations. But in that village,

there are some who revolt and decide to go and fight, while others revolt and seek to flee the country forever, and others resign themselves and turn to God and pray all day, and others still work harder than they ever did before simply to survive and feed their families. All of them seek a solution to the same problems, but with different attitudes, different ways to affirm themselves. So, Peter, I think masculinity is a very moving target. It’s a funny thing, this masculinity.

One final remark. As said earlier, I did not interview any demobilized CNDD/FDD officers. This is in all likelihood because they have overwhelmingly been integrated in the new army (FDN) and the police. For these young men, who were more educated than the large majority of the ordinary rebel recruits, joining the CNDD/FDD may well have turned out to be an excellent long-term career move. This quote of a 30 years old ex-CNDD/FDD soldier, with one year of university education, who is now chef de police in a rural town, is illustrative:

“as you can see, I am living very well. I have a nice house and all the women are interested in me. I am one of only five people here in this commune who can drink more than one primus without having to steal the money. I do not want a job in the local administration [we had asked him what he would do if he were to be communal administrator-PU]: his job is too insecure. Me, I will move up in grade and get a nice desk job in the city in a few years.”

III. Why they left

Why did soldiers demobilize? Of those with whom I discussed this question, about two-thirds demobilized voluntarily and one-third against their will. Those who did not want to demobilize were obliged to do so foremost because of their age (this includes many of the FAB career soldiers); insubordination and lack of studies were mentioned as well.

- 50 year old career ex-FAB, now farmer in Ruhororo: “I did not want to demobilize, for the idea

⁴ See Barker & Ricardo 2007 for an example. This article is truly excellent, based on deep and original insights. Yet, at the same time, it presents a picture of almost unrelenting violence and exploitation of and by young men, as if no other modalities of social identity and interaction exist for young men.

Part 1: A Profile of Ex-Combatants

of getting used to another type of life was hard after 25 years in service. I was demobilized against my will because of age.”

- 30 year old ex-CNDD, now farmer and mason in Nyanza-Lac: “I was demobilized because I had done no studies; if not, I always dreamt of a military career.”
- 26 year old ex-FAB, now farmer in Ruhororo: “I am still young and I still have enough strength to fight in the army. I was demobilized because, when I took one glass too many, I fought with other soldiers or I insulted someone who provoked me, even if it was my superior.”

The answers of those who requested to be demobilized fall into four groups. Some of them were tired of the war, simply wanted to return to regular life, stop fighting and moving around and constantly being afraid. A second group was sick or wounded, and could not go on anymore in any case—they were forced by circumstances. A third group argued that they had won: their goal for joining had been achieved, and now it was time to return to regular life. Those answers came from the group that had joined for ideological reasons in the first place. A last group, finally, was angry at the military structures they were part of: they left because they had not been paid, they were treated badly, they felt threatened by internal purges, etc.

- 33 year old ex-FAB *taxi-vélo*, Ruhororo: “I wanted to leave my military career. In fact, I wanted to do it for a long time, but because desertion is forbidden, I prayed to the kind God that the opportunity to leave would present itself one day. I have experienced the horrors that take place on the battle field, because I ought to have been killed many times from confrontations with the rebels (two brothers have been killed). I would like to try another life than a military career.”
- 28 year old driver, Kamenge, ex-CNDD/FDD: “I volunteered to be demobilized in April 2003. I felt tired; my body had gotten too many physical and moral shocks.”

- 36 year old farmer in Nyanza-Lac: “I used to be a farmer, but since I am demobilized I cannot do it anymore for I am infirm as a result of having been shot; my left side is paralyzed and I cannot do activities anymore that demand physical labor. That is also why I was demobilized. I asked for it and put myself on the list.”

- 38 year old farmer, Nyanza-Lac, former CNDD-Nyangoma, imprisoned for years in Tanzania: “I joined voluntarily and left because we were successful, and I could go back to work the fields again.”

- 32 year old ex-CNDD farmer: “After the ceasefire, when we were in the cantonment camp, we talked with our friends, and started realizing that all that had been promised to us were utopias—that it would never be possible to give to all combatants what had been promised to them. We told ourselves that we fought for the authorities who have a higher educational level than we do. I saw that even if I wasn’t demobilized, I would not get a major gain from it. So I asked for the demobilization.”

I also received 16 answers from the *self*-demobilized as to why they made their decision to quit. The largest category of explanations of their quitting their outfits revolve around sickness and injury; a large number were angry at the military structures they were part of; the others were afraid and found the life of constant battle and deprivation too hard. In short, they left for the exact same reasons the officially demobilized did—they only had the misfortune of doing so too early, usually without permission of their superiors—and as a result, from their own perspective, after years of suffering, they are the ones who missed out on the pay-out .

In conclusion, two-thirds of the demobilized combatants told us they wanted to leave, and few of them mentioned money as the key factor. All the self-demobilized, by definition, had already voted with their feet: they, too, had clearly not wanted to remain combatants. All in all, then, only a small proportion of ex-combatants were demobilized against their will. Does this imply that we did not really need a DDR program, for most soldiers would have demobilized in any case? It is hard to answer this question, for it requires us to construct

counter-factual scenarios about people's motives and actions. DDR programs can be considered as means to buy time for peace to produce its beneficial effects. They are not social service programs, or development projects, but simply conflict reduction tools during a transition from war to peace.

What DDR programs really do is not to entice combatants to abandon the soldiering career path—for most would do so regardless, and the whole process is in any case deeply dependent on peace agreements—but rather to make their transition to a new life more successful by increasing their income and stabilizing their new livelihood. This, then, might lower their temptation to return to their former profession, or simply to terrorize their neighbors and communities in search of survival. This is what the MDRP sets out to achieve. This implies that DDR programs must be evaluated not only by how many people they demobilized—for that indicator is likely to far over-state impact—but by how successful they were in creating worthwhile *economic opportunities* for all ex-combatants⁵. It is only if this is the case that the communities these ex-combatants return to are safer. In this respect, there are still serious challenges remaining for the Burundian DDR program. This is what we now turn to.

⁵ I personally believe that this judgment should include the self-demobilized soldiers, for their unwillingness to live peacefully in a new post-war economy can have a profoundly destabilizing impact on political stability—as is attested by the fact that the large majority of self-demobilized we interviewed had been approached for recruitment during the preceding weeks by a number of actors.

Part 2: After Demobilization

I. The Economic Picture

From an economic perspective, the cases of child soldiers, of demobilized adults in the North, in the South, and in the capital, and of course of self-demobilized are very different, and so we will discuss them separately.

A. The child soldiers

Apart from one *gardien de la paix*, all 8 former child soldiers I interviewed received the funds—or, to be precise: their families did, as per international protocols on supporting the reintegration of former child soldiers. All except one were in the two poorest economic groups in their communities. However, none of them told us that they were better off beforehand. This suggests, as did a study done by the World Bank in May 2006, that these child soldiers—or more precisely the households in which they were integrated and from which they originated—are basically as badly or as well off as everyone else around them (Taouti-Cherif 2006: 7).

The ex child soldiers we interviewed claim they that most of their demobilization allowance has been spent on social expenditures for their families. This confirms the logic of the set-up of the child soldier demobilization program, in which cash is not given to the child soldier himself; instead, the implementing agencies negotiate with the host families of the child soldiers on what the allowance should be used for and the support is then given in kind. The allowance was too small to make any of them better off, and the set-up (18 monthly payments of 20\$) favored social rather than individual or entrepreneurial investments. It is true that the program also pays school or vocational training fees for those who so desire, as well as some exceptional medical expenses if required. In short, through this design, the level of well-being of the child soldiers and their families by and large became equal to that of others in the community

– which was the objective of the program.

In the IDP camp in Ruhororo, rather exceptionally, UNICEF allowed the child soldiers to receive cash for themselves. I interviewed three child soldiers in that place. Two of them (both 18 year old ex-FAB, both in economic category 2⁶) seem to have done reasonably well with that.

- “with the money I got from the demob program, I started a boutique and it is still working well;”
- “with the money from demobilization program, I bought goats and I am raising them. I also bought a bicycle to have a *taxi-vélo*, but someone stole it. I also bought a small piece of land.”

While these are too few cases to draw major conclusions from, this suggests that the program could have given cash as well. The third person (ex-FAB as well, 19 years old) had major family emergencies that needed to be addressed:

“My father is deceased. With the money from the program, I had to support my mother and my younger siblings; repair the house we all live in, which was in a pitiful state; and get one of my brothers out of the hospital where he was imprisoned for not paying his hospitalization fees. I have no plans for the future, because I have no money.”

To finish this discussion, then: most child soldiers are in the lower economic groups in which their families found themselves in before the war. The set-up of the program a) favored their reinsertion into their families, and sought to achieve this by negotiating the use of their

⁶ Throughout the research, we tried to categorize interviewees in three economic groups—indigent (1), poor (2), and non-poor (3). This was based on information obtained about number of farm animals, quality of the house, frequency of hiring labor, and presence of off-farm income sources. The judgments we made are necessarily imperfect, but they do provide a decent indication.

allowance with their host families, and b) gave them a small amount of money that made no major difference in their or their family's situation. As a result, they did not suddenly and individually "fall into money" (contrary to what is the case with some of the adult demobilized soldiers, as we will discuss below) and their economic situation reverted pretty much back to the situation *ex ante quo*. As most rural households fall into economic category 1 and 2 as well, this suggests that they are neither richer nor poorer than their families and/or their situation of departure. This can be considered either a success (as program managers do) or a failure (as many of the child soldiers do, as does Lancaster 2005: 30).

The rationale for the difference between programs working for child soldiers and those catering to regular ex-combatants, respects the Cape Town principles on assisting child soldiers, but, it seems to me, makes little sense. These young men are mostly 18 or 19 years old. They fought for years. They are not children in any meaning of the term: they have done more, seen more, suffered more, and inflicted more pain than most of the adults managing the program (see too Lancaster 2005: 31). Why, then, give them significantly less than what the adult ex-combatants receive, just because their birthday is a few months earlier? Cannot a system of sliding scales be introduced—sliding in function of age and/or in function of number of years of combat? Why also not allow them to invest more in a single project?

To finish this discussion, then: the economic situation of the child soldiers has reverted pretty much back to the situation they left years earlier. Especially for urban child soldiers, the resulting situation could be dire: the funds may not last long in the city as in rural areas and could be insufficient for productive investments in developing a livelihood. There is thus a real risk that some of these children could become part of the urban world's underclass.

B. Demobilized ex-combatants in Ngozi Province (Busiga and Ruhororo)

The story is surprisingly different for the 10 demobilized adults (4 CNDD and 6 FAB) we interviewed in Ngozi province. Out of the ten, 9 fell into the highest economic

category of rural life. We have no reason to assume that this is the result of their better initial conditions. The only thing that sets these demobilized soldiers apart is that they fell into a lot of money.

All received what are by rural standards major financial packages upon demobilizing, and the large majority of them invested this reinsertion money in off-farm income generation. Most of them had distinctly more resources—bikes, radios, animals, a boutique—that allowed them to invest in off-agriculture opportunities, and plow part of the profit back into the farm which was taken care of by their wives. Many of these people seemed distinctly at ease with their lives, talking about dreams they had, investments they intended to make, etc. It seems we can describe the demobilized soldiers in Ngozi as a new entrepreneurial middle class.

Many of these people seemed distinctly at ease with their lives, talking about dreams they had, investments they intended to make, etc.

- 28 year old PMPA, self-identified as a trader: "I am a business man. I import goods from other countries and sell them in Burundi's cities. Although I am educated as a teacher, I will not earn enough in this profession. For that reason, I follow in my father's footsteps as a businessman. I have seven goats."
- 28 years old ex-CNDD, married for 7 years, but demobilized only in 2005: "During the harvest, I buy and stock food and sell later, waiting for prices to increase. If I have money, I go to Rwanda to import goods and sell them in Ngozi. My wife also does farming (she has 8 goats as well). I have not had a fixed job since demobilization."
- 33 year old ex-FAB, Ruhororo IDP camp: "With the demobilization money, I have bought additional land, and one cow and three goats to have fertilizer to enrich the earth. I already had 3 cows, and I hope that I will have enough fertilizer for all my properties. Today, the number of goats I have is 8. Even before demobilization, I always saw my life in agriculture and animal husbandry, and I have always had the thirst to extend the property that my parents left for me. I will continue to improve my techniques

for husbandry and agriculture. If I am able to make a profit, I will invest in a small trade.”

Note that these results are not to be expected throughout the Burundian territory, as we will see in the following pages. I think they are likely to be more representative of a) rural areas rather than urban ones, b) ex-combatants who returned to the homes that were still in existence, and c) people who returned to the North and Center of the country—regions with similarly extreme population density and stagnant agriculture.

Note also that most of these people had not yet started to receive the inputs for their micro-project: the things they bought—land, animals, cases of Primus, bikes, boutiques—they did exclusively with the reinsertion payments they had already received. Most of them are still to obtain, at some point in the future, in-kind assistance (value of up to 600,000 francs) to use in an income-generating project. Hence, I expect that their upwards economic movement will be further solidified.

Of course, there are always exceptions, and they are very instructive. Some of the ex-FAB career soldiers—long-term, regular, career soldiers, that is, not new recruits during the civil war—felt they lost as a result of demobilization: they resented the loss of both the volume and the predictability of their salaries. Their case, then, is one of people already being in the rural middle class, and becoming less secure following demobilization. Indeed, the houses they lived in were much better than those of almost everyone around them—nice furniture, tiles, decorated walls, cushions. But they were palpably afraid of the future.

Second, not all demobilized, evidently, invested equally well, or had the same success with their investments. Whether it is theft or disease or economic downturn or simply bad management, it is clear that investments can and do fail, and hence ex-combatants can fall back to the situation they started from. In any market-based system, as rural life in Burundi is, failure is always a possibility, and there is no way to avoid that (although better business training and the development of an insurance system might actually achieve a lot here).

Thirdly, some ex-combatants encountered urgent needs at home. As a result, they had to use part of the money

they received on non-productive activities, such as rebuilding houses, buying food, getting health care for family members, paying past hospital bills, etc. The last years have seen extremely unfavorable weather and very bad harvests in northern Burundi, creating famine and extreme poverty in many places. This made it hard for some ex-combatants to engage in profitable investments, although through no fault of the DDR program.

Finally, we met one person who represented the fears of all development managers who manage cash programs (as opposed to in-kind), for he blatantly wasted the money he received. While such persons evidently exist, they are a very small minority.

- 26 year old ex-FAB, Ruhororo IDP camp: “The money that I was given went first to help with the needs of my parents who live in extreme poverty. Also, I like to drink alcohol because it improves my morale. I could not stop myself from drinking if I have the means for it. After having spent six years in the military, I am no longer able to adapt to cultivation. I have gone there a few times, but I am unable to hoe the earth Monday to Saturday. When I don’t go to the fields, I spend my time in the ligala to see if there is someone who will buy me a local beer, or if I can earn a little money to buy one for myself. I had hoped to be able to make a project with the last installment (of the 600,000FBU), but there too, things worked against my expectations because the money disappeared. I have nothing left today.”

This person is the only ex-combatant in Ngozi whom we put in the lowest economic category. We did not have the chance to figure out if he suffered from trauma.

C. Demobilized combatants in Nyanza-Lac

The *collines* where we were doing these interviews, like so many others in the province of Makamba, had been almost totally empty of people during the last years of the war: everyone had fled either to IDP camps or abroad. Return waves only began in 2003 and are still ongoing: in each *bureau de zone* we passed, every morning trucks disgorged new returnee families, their meager possessions and starter kits all around them,

their children looking wide-eyed at this new land that is theirs.

Indeed, almost all the demobilized—especially the older ones—we spoke to in Nyanza-Lac had to invest most of their money in the basic establishment of their household.

- 37 year old farmer, ex-CNDD: “I used the money to build a house for my wife and four children. As we had to begin doing agriculture here from scratch, I also used the rest to buy food for a year.”
- 30 years old farmer, ex-CNDD-Nyangoma: “yes, I got demob fees but I did not use them for development purposes because I had nothing at all when I returned here. As you can see, I am not a child anymore and it is astonishing that I have married so recently. I used the money to construct my house and also to pay for the wedding. I don’t regret it because I know I used it for useful goals.”
- 32 year old farmer, ex-Kaze-FDD Ndayirengurukiye: “With the first 300,000 francs, I had to take care of lots of material needs: house, food. Afterwards (90,000 francs every 3 months), I hired people to work in the fields to cultivate my land.”

The demobilized soldiers who returned to Nyanza-Lac thus faced high start-up costs. They had to build houses and start agriculture from scratch, which means that their production and income for at least a year was far below normal. For all these people, then, a much higher proportion of the demobilization wages had to go into non-directly productive investments, which may explain why they are in a lower economic category. They were no different from the non-combatants in these collines in this respect: they had the same needs and did the same things others did.

For some of them, there was still money left to invest:

- 37 year old infirm man, ex CNDD-FDD: “I started a small commerce of palm oil with some of the funds from the demobilization.”
- 28 year old female farmer, ex CNDD-FDD: “we bought a goat, and two parcels of land where we planted manioc. We kept some money and will soon start building our own house.”
- 42 year old sous-chef de colline, ex-CNDD-FDD: “I bought a piece of land. I also opened a restaurant in my house [this man is clearly proud of his spirit of entrepreneurship].”

In Nyanza-Lac, investments were often in farming—unlike in Ngozi, where they were almost all in off-farm income sources. In both cases, this reflects the dreams and aspirations of all people in these communities. In Nyanza-Lac, there is a general sense of the promise of farming, especially palm oil and manioc, whereas in Ngozi there is almost unanimity that only off-farm income can help a family move ahead. The demonstrates that demobilized are not wasting their money, but investing it exactly the way any person would if s/he were to fall into money—not worse (but also, admittedly, not better⁷).

In Nyanza-Lac, ex-combatants across the board complained much more bitterly than in Ngozi province of the fact that the promised micro-project funds had not yet been disbursed. The following quotes speak for themselves:

- 47 year old farmer, Nyanza-Lac: “We demobilized of our *colline* got together to think of a joint activity and the main idea was this house of the association [points to it]. We put together money to buy a parcel and construct a house, but our disappointment is great that we cannot pursue the trade activities we envisage. Now we have the house and we don’t know what to do with it: rent it out, or do some small trade, but to sell what if we have no money? (...) If we got the money, we could put a part into the association and develop a serious business, and put a part into our own personal activities. I would buy a piece of land to cultivate. (...) We were happy with the Demobilization Commission at first, the training on reintegration, on AIDS, and the

⁷ The fact that ex-combatants invest their funds in exactly what their neighbors invest in can be seen as a good sign—it demonstrates ex-combatants are not wasting their money—or as a bad sign: they are simply further saturating already saturated markets, failing to diversify. Clearly, better economic encadrement and training might have avoided some of that.

money we received every three months. But since everything has fallen apart. We don't know what became of that Commission and what they think of us."

- 38 year old farmer: "We have been asking for the remaining money many times. We did so in peace, but we are former soldiers and if our request is not satisfied, we will use forceful means."
- 25 year old farmer: (interviewed together with the previous): "I don't want to use force, but if this situation goes on for, like, five years, I'd lose hope and do anything. You can't see others live well and you yourself know you're deprived of your rights."

This stronger anger could be for either—or both—of two reasons. First, many of these people were generally politically more explicit than the ex-combatants we interviewed elsewhere. They were often people who had joined because of an explicit political agenda, and many of them (all three quoted above, for example) were not CNDD/FDD supporters but rather CNDD (Nyangoma) or Kaze-FDD supporters. In other words, they may have felt more at ease to criticize government policies as they identified less strongly with the party which controls national power. The second reason may be a follow-up from what we discussed so far: as most of them had had to spend much more of their demobilization payments on constructing or upgrading their houses and on initial basic survival, they may have felt the absence of the micro-project funds much more keenly.

Unlike in Ngozi province, the demobs we talked to in Nyanza-Lac did not belong to the highest economic class. Whereas in Ngozi, 9 out of 10 demobilized ex-combatants were in the highest rural economic class 3, in Nyanza-Lac only 1 out of 12 was in that group. Ten were in the middle group ("poor"), and one in category 1, the indigent. This suggests that in Nyanza-Lac, the sum they received—just the reinsertion payments so far, but not yet the reintegration assistance—was not sufficient to make much of a difference compared to their neighbors (who often received reinstallation aid, which our ex-combatants did not receive). At the same time, it does seem to protect ex-combatants against destitution. This may change when they get the micro-project funds and if they use these well: more of them

may make it to the middle class then.

D. Demobilized in the city

This category is mostly a more extreme version of the problems of Nyanza-Lac. Many of the non-officer ex-combatants who return to the city face major costs of a non-productive nature right away, while at the same time having few ways of earning money. They are from poor families in poor neighborhoods; they have less schooling than the already low average around them; and they lost the social networks which are so important to progress in the city. They are truly in a tough situation. As a result, for them, even more than for those in Nyanza-Lac, the tardiness of the micro-project is truly problematic to them. Many of them complained bitterly about incurring debts while waiting for the micro-project. Add to this a much more generally politically charged environment, and it is here that one finds by far some of the most critical and angry voices about the DDR program.

Here are some longer quotes—one from an ex-FAB soldier and two from ex-CNDD rebels—that give a good idea of the urban situation:

- Unemployed young man in Musaga: "Everyone got 303,000 francs as 9 months of salary. In the army I touched about 3 times less for the same amount of work. With the money I bought some personal things, for I had nothing personal in the army. Now the money is used and I am back at the starting point. I do have hope, but not much."
- 28 years old shoe seller, Kamenge: "I was a volunteer to be demobilized and I received my wages but I still await the micro-project phase and I don't know when that will be. The DDR program is good but the problem is that the people who take care of it work slowly and there are too many procedures. It is already one year we wait for the micro-project. In the meantime we become indebted, and when the project money will come, instead of doing a project we will need to use it to pay off the debts. (...) The money I got during the first phase of the DDR program didn't serve me for much because after all these years in the army, there were many problems to solve at home,

and we ourselves had nothing either: we needed to buy clothes, a mattress, etc. It was a good program, but the implementation is too slow and finally it will not be profitable anymore for us beneficiaries. Now that I am not getting the wages anymore I need to find myself the money for the rent of my place. For months I am looking for work, any work, but without results.

- 28 year old driver, Kamenge: “I was a field man, and towards the end I became *garde de corps* of a general (the same one who had recruited me). I also assured the protection of many high officers who now occupy important places and who don’t do anything at all for us and don’t even want to see us. When I think of that, I look at my son who had fever this morning and I can’t even buy him medicines (a neighbor helped me and gave me a tablet of *paracetamol*). In any case he will never be a military: I will do all I can to dissuade him of that. (...) I got the salaries of the first phase but I still wait for the second project phase. The DDR program is a good one, with its two phases. But the problem is that often with the money of the first phase, when you come home, you are obliged to equip yourself (mattress, clothes, do some work on a room in your family’s house, or rent a room). So when the second project phase is delayed because of bureaucratic reasons and the people who manage the project make a catastrophe out of it, you are obliged to get into debt instead of doing a project; the longer it takes, the worse the situation becomes. (...) I will continue to demand my rights with the bosses who are now in power because of our fight. Now that we won, we succeeded in our mission, and they pretend they forgot us but they know, the DDR program is the money of the UN, it is not theirs. (...) You cannot imagine one day passed in the forest as a fighter, what that represents in terms of suffering, of pain... and yet, in the field, during the “*causeries morales*” they promised to never drop us. Now they are in the government they need to find us work for the DDR money is just enough to go home and not need to beg the first days... It is them who make the lists, it is our movement which is in power, so they could at least plead for us.... If I got the money from the 2nd phase of DDR by Jan 2007, I would have to reimburse a debt of 50,000 francs, which isn’t too bad, compared to others who have to reimburse 18 months of rent! I

would buy a bike to do *taxi-vélo*, but also buy some chicken, and a stall to sell stuff along the road. My plan would then be to live off the money earned and to be able to buy back my driver’s license (that will cost me 30,000 francs⁸) and look for better work.”

There is a second, entirely different category of demobilized in the city of Bujumbura city, and it consists of former career FAB soldiers, often officers. They spent many more years in the army—decades, sometimes—and have better educational levels. While the ones I spoke to were all born in the interior, they had established residence in Bujumbura city by the time they were demobilized: these are all people who are upwardly mobile compared to their parents who were herders and farmers in the *collines*. They are also much better off than the young ex-combatants we just discussed: most of them fall in economic category 3 and 4. Their situation is dual. From one perspective, like the career ex-FAB soldiers we met in the interior, they are losing the security of a decent and stable salary. On the other hand, they possess much more financial, social and human capital than all the other ex-combatants discussed so far; they tend to have houses, wives with salaried jobs, older children with university degrees, well-connected and wealthy friends. They seem mostly to have converted successfully to civilian life, with the exception of a severely wounded man.

E. The plight of the self-demobilized

The self-demobilized did not receive support from anyone, except their families. This situation they by and large share with their fellow urban youth, which is also not supported by any agency whatsoever. However, they did spend much of their youth fighting and suffering extraordinarily, and this makes them extremely bitter. They are as a group more feeling more excluded, more depressed, more hopeless than any other urban group we talked to—and that is saying a lot, as the level of hopelessness and depression was higher in urban areas than in rural ones. They are also angry—actually, it seems their anger is their defining identity feature. This holds for all the self-demobilized we met, whether from CNDD/FDD, FAB or FNL.

⁸ Note that a driver’s license legally cost 5,000 francs at the time, but everyone knows that the real price, i.e., after kickback, is 30,000 francs.

Part 2: After Demobilization

A few quotes will illustrate this. For evident reasons, I kept all of these people without identifiers. Suffice it to say these are all below 26 years of age and all started as child soldiers, sometimes as young as age 11. They all live in neighborhoods of Bujumbura city or the immediately adjoining *collines* of Bujumbura rural. They are mostly unemployed and amongst the very poorest people we met. The quotes below include combatants from all three parties to the conflict.

- I have no regrets about my military past, because we got what we wanted to get (peace and power sharing). But I am very angry about one thing, and that is that they are in power now because of our fighting and they forgot us, dropped us, even without a thank you like the others got (the formally demobilized). (...) The people on whom I counted, those for whom I worked all these years, now pretend to forget us, to ignore us. (...) I find that I did a useless sacrifice for it is neither recognized nor recompensed. I look at young people my age who went to school, most of them are well off. (...) I am pleased with the peace and the cohabitation in my neighborhood, but it remains very fragile as long as there are people in our situation, with permanent anger: bad temptations out of despair can attract you as long as you feel yourself to suffer from injustice. For example, I myself start to think that the sole solution for me is still to take up arms and fight. It would be better than the life I lead now. I did everything to claim what is due to me, I even went to see the General and they say “we will see.” It hurts when you see false lists, with young men who are inscribed because they are family of a high ranking officer, who now receive demob funds without ever having fought, and we are there, we see all of this....
- Now I am here, I do nothing, I look for work without finding it, I feel very frustrated and I think it is unjust. I went to see my ex-commander who works here in Bujumbura and he even refuses me to enter the building. I have no hope at all today for receiving demob fees; maybe there is someone who gets them in my place. (...) I live in the family house with my brothers and sisters and my mother and I contribute nothing but eat two meals a day.
- I compare our situation and the one of young people who did not fight, their situation is today

better. Our cause has succeeded, but we feel like useless heroes. Now it is time to share and we are excluded from the list. I would advise the people in power to be very wise and attentive to the question of the self-demobilized. There is always one movement out there and if this continues like this, why not go there to seek what we did not get and to recuperate our lost time? Now we know how it works and we will not be had again.

- With a group of friends in the same situation we went to plead our case to get also a registration number like all the others to be either reintegrated or demobilized, but the response was negative: our superiors would not even listen to us. (...) I don't know why I did not get any support from those who made me work all these years (1996-2004) and now they don't even want to see me. The war has affected me too much, in every way: for me, it is about fear and disappointment, too many useless sacrifices.
- Of course I request the movement, which is now the government, to recognize me and to support me for I have suffered through more than 5 years of fighting, of suffering and of sacrifice, in order to arrive. They have promised to do it before and it is now time they do it. If I could just get indemnities like the others, or simply a job. Now I pass my time here doing nothing, moving through the city, hoping for a small opportunity that almost never comes.

And it goes on and on like this. Clearly, their sense of being neglected, of having sacrificed themselves without recognition or compensation, is very strong. For many of them, it seems to be *the* defining feature of their new identities. They receive no support at all: indeed, most of them bitterly complain about not being seen by their former commanders, or not being let into the building or, if they do get in, of being rapidly dismissed. It is the humiliation of that treatment that seems to sting the most—the denial of their combatant identities.

Not surprisingly, most self-demobilized have serious trouble with their reintegration. In a study of DDR in Sierra Leone, the study team argues “that reintegration of ex-combatants after the war in Sierra Leone is hindered... by a strong sense of grievance among young people

who believe that they have not been fairly treated in the [DDR].”⁹ This fits the idea observed in an IPA study that those “who perceive themselves as belonging...apart from the rest of society...have trouble reintegrating socially and psychologically.”¹⁰ These self-demobilized youth, it seems to me, are deeply defined by their sense of exclusion and injustice done to them. Few of the self-demobilized we talked to have married since returning, or have found a job; indeed, most of them have no plans for the future. They display signs of depression and alienation and lack of social reintegration

There are some exceptions, and, unsurprisingly, these are the ones with jobs. Two FAB self-demobilized are security guards; one ex-CNDD had a mini-bakery; a female rural ex-combatant became chef de *colline*; and, finally, one ex-FNL took up his studies again and finished high school (admittedly he only did one year in the FNL, the lowest of any of our self-demobilized, so he is not very representative). These people—all of them in economic category 2 or 3—did not display the usual bitterness. They had moved on. But within our sample they were the exceptions.

One could argue that, everywhere in the world, people who leave armies or rebels groups without permission are deserters—in many places, the death sentence is the answer to that. On the other hand, nobody should forget that, with few exceptions, the self-demobilized we met were *children* when they were recruited. And now they are totally discarded because they had the misfortune of being too sick, too tired of it, too smart to continue acting as canon fodder. As Adrien Tuyaga observed well in a video JAMAA (a local youth organization) made on this subject: “we are punishing these self-demobilized children”¹¹. Their only fault is that they understood that the war is not for them, and that they returned without the permission of their butchers.”

⁹ Richards et al. 2003: 5. As we will see later, this holds—but, I believe, to a much lesser extent—for many of the demobilized child soldiers as well.

¹⁰ Hagman & Nielson 2002: 4.

¹¹ Note that the use of the term “child soldier” here is different from the regular use. In DDR programs, the word ‘child’ refers to combatants under the age of 18 when they left. While many in my sample were young, they were often not children when they left. Note also that regulations state that self-demobilized children can actually access the child soldier program, so for some of them the issue is more one of awareness raising than exclusion. For the majority of my interviewees who were more than 18 at self-demobilization, though, there was no venue for support.

The plight of the self-demobilized could pose a threat to the consolidation of peace. The majority of those we sampled were angry and frustrated, badly reintegrated in their communities. The level of threats they voiced was high. It seems urgent that some creative thinking takes place around this issue.

What to do about this situation? The first step is to recognize the problem. These people are mostly invisible to policy-makers. They are often among the poorest. They are afraid to be too visible, for they worry they could run into trouble with the law. So far, their sole strategy seems to have consisted of trying, individually or in small groups, to get to their former superiors and asking for money. But their former military superiors—many of whom are now in the army or the police, some of whom are fighting still (FNL)—neglect them and close the door to them. In short, nobody speaks for them or supports them.

It may be hard to formally include them in DDR programming. Military ethos, as well as management and targeting problems, militate against that solution—although it should still be considered. Maybe they should best be targeted in broader programs designed for income generation in urban areas or for supporting the social inclusion of young people. Support, based on vulnerability and need, rather than ex-combatant status, might in this case indeed be more likely to benefit true reintegration. There is generally a dearth of such programs in Bujumbura. Indeed, one of the major—and surprising—observations we made in our research is the profound neglect of the city of Bujumbura. Reconstruction programs are more present in rural areas than in urban ones; projects and programs providing micro-credit, associational support, job creation and training are almost totally absent from Bujumbura. This is generally a dangerous situation, which ought to change. New programming ought to urgently come online for marginal urban youth, and efforts should be undertaken that self-demobilized young men are included in this.

This will require some fine work with these young people. Much of their identity is currently tied up in a sense of victimization. For them to reach some degree of closure, then, may well require respecting—and

addressing, modifying—their identities of exclusion. They will need to be treated with utmost respect, their past not brushed under the table. It will take an organization, and people, sympathetic to their plight, to pull this dual mandate off. It will also take serious participation by the self-demobilized themselves to make this happen.

II. Social Reinsertion

A. Child soldiers

In our interviews, all the child soldiers except one had returned to the original family home, except for one young man whose parents were deceased and who had returned to the uncle he lived with during the war, just before he joined. This mirrors the fact that nationwide more than 90% of child soldiers live with their biological families (see too Tatoui-Cherif 2006: 21). This suggests that child soldiers have not become social outcasts, systematically rejected by their families and communities. There were few reprisals or violent rejections. And the pleasure was both ways. Hear one of them talk about his family: “I was a child soldier and I left my parents and I was very anxious because I thought that I would die one day and leave them in sorry situation. It was a joy for me when I was demobilized and I found my parents still living.”

At the same time we are pleasantly surprised by this very high rate of reintegration, there exists a significant image in the rural world of describing—or rather lumping together, dismissing—returned child soldiers as drunks, petty criminals, or drug users, hanging out at the *centre de negoce*, wasting their money, and generally being dangerous. This stereotype was presented regularly, in small remarks here and there, never with proof but as a sort of evident fact. Administrators and policemen, for example, routinely warned us of the child soldiers in these terms.

Our interviews did not support this description. All eight UNICEF-supported child soldiers we talked to were working: groom, woodworking, selling clothes in the city, farming, *taxi-vélo*, running a small boutique. With the exception of one (the orphan whose uncle had made him foreman in a sizeable woodworking shop in

Bujumbura city center), none of these jobs was earning well. But all of these were young men working, morning to evening, to support themselves.

Re-reading the interviews with these eight young men, and comparing them to the interviews we did with others of the same age but who had not fought, one observes few striking differences. They wanted to marry like other young men. They wanted their children to be educated like the overwhelming majority of others do. They made fine analyses of life around them. They worked hard.

There was only one exception, one child soldier who told us of his alienation: “The members of my family have no consideration for me anymore. I rarely confide myself in them. Twice I was imprisoned by the police, and it is my paternal uncle who came to plead in my favor.” This is a rural young man: he used to be a porter for the FAB, and was officially demobilized. He was interviewed in the *ligala*, a place he clearly knew well.

Where does this general image of child soldiers as criminals, then, come from? It may be a reflection of wider distrust, of anger at these young men who were killers and whom people may know did bad things. Knowledgeable people tell me that in some communes, there were cases of serious anger by people against the child soldiers receiving demob funds. The argument was: why would these young men, who were the most cruel and violent, get money—whereas the ones who stayed home, who suffered from the war, who helped their parents, get nothing? In our discussions, nobody ever made such public outcries of anger, but it may well be that the way child soldiers were systematically described as little criminals had something to do with a basic unease among some members of the community towards them. Or it may simply be a general instance of the imagery local communities tend to attach to marginal young men.

Indeed, our general research revealed that Burundians generally refer to marginalized young people in terms of banditry and prostitution. This whole area of personal responsibility, success and failure, and social marginalization is at the very heart of how Burundians interpret their society. Very often, and almost always in urban areas, conversations contained references to the

“*centre de negoce*” and the “*ligala*” and, for women, “prostitution.” These are the key words to describe people who don’t live the way society values—“deviant” or “marginal” people, in sociological language. The *centre de negoce* refers to a market area, often very small, where people come to buy and sell things. There are often a slew of little bars there, maybe someone selling goat brochettes, a couple of boutiques and a few artisan shops—bike and shoe repair, for example. Youth hangs out there, especially in the afternoon, both in the countryside and in the city. *Ligala* is a Swahili word that denotes a place to hang out. It could be a market place, or any other public place where people tend to congregate. In the city, these are often places on the street sidewalk, under a tree mostly, so there is some shade. It is a word with a negative connotation—as is *centre de negoce*, when used in this way. There is an element of idleness in it, of menace, of deviance. In Bujumbura, the term *ligala* also has an association with the violent events of the beginning of the war: it is youth hanging out at *ligala* that did the brutal killings during those awful years. The term “prostitution” is of course applied to women, and similarly denotes a fall from grace, a failure to live up to expectations of productivity and chastity. All these, then, are images used mainly for young people, and their power lies in their association with failure—lack of leading a productive, socially valued life. These are the images that come to Burundians’ minds when they think about marginal youth. It is these same terms that were used when describing many child soldiers and demobilized soldiers, because these young men are equal marginal from the mainstream expectations of life.

A final point to be addressed here is the issue of jealousy. Is there a strong sense of jealousy among people in the communities where the child soldiers return to about the benefits received by the latter? The Taouti-Cherif report suggests that there *may* be (and recommends further research); occasional radio emissions document cases of jealousy turned violent; Burundian and foreign experts in Bujumbura unanimously told us this is a major problem. Yet in our interviews, it never came up. Admittedly, we did not ask questions specifically related to it, but nobody brought it up spontaneously either—not the child soldiers themselves and not the non-combatants in their neighborhoods. It is my sense that, by itself, the jealousy problem is much less severe than is often thought.

B. Demobilized soldiers

The social reinsertion of adult ex-combatants is generally quite good, it seems, although there are some hints of problems. The largest number of interviewees says that they are well treated by their neighbors and families: they do not mention any conflicts or problems at all (see Taylor, Samii and Mvukiyehe 2006: 18 for the same results). As these were people who were often very critical about other issues, I see no reason to assume they were all lying about this one issue.

Most of the adult ex-combatants we talked to had returned to their *collines* of birth, or, in the city, to their neighborhoods of previous residence. This sample, then, suggests (subject to confirmation by a more robust research) that there has not been a massive move of demobilized soldiers to the city—a prevalent fear among many observers. As a result, ex-combatants lived in places where people knew them, their families, their past lives. Moreover, three of the ex-combatants we met had been elected in the *conseil collinaire* a year ago—a sure sign that they are not only well integrated but that they actually have the respect of their communities.

Many ex-combatants also returned to pretty much mono-ethnic communities. The demobilized in Ruhororo camp, for example, which is a fully Tutsi IDP camp, were all ex-FAB. In Kamenge, an almost exclusively Hutu neighborhood, we only found CNDD/FDD and FNL ex-combatants, whereas in Musaga all but one were ex-FAB. That helps their social reintegration as well: they may be considered heroes in their communities. As a 16 year old student told us admiringly: “the ex-combatants are my friends, and I consider them my big brothers. They liberated us, and I feel stronger than before, more secure than before. It is a pity that after all they did, they are in this situation [of poverty].” The situation is harder for the self-demobilized, as they can at any time be denounced by neighbors with a grudge, and either imprisoned or re-captured.

Of the rural ex-combatants, only two—a child soldier and an adult—told us about jealousy towards them in the community; the others did not bring this up. In our hundreds of conversations with non-combatants, the demobilized were never once brought up as an economic

problem. Hence, like with the child soldiers, there seems to be no major social fact of jealousy towards former soldiers in rural Burundi.

That said, there are some problems as well. In the city, many of the demobilized are unemployed. Like other unemployed young men, they hang out together, doing nothing much of the time, looking for little jobs, getting wasted at times, and being pretty unhappy about life. Not surprisingly, their neighbors often distrust them. There were some references by ex-combatants to the fact that people attributed crimes to them.

- 26 year unemployed self-demobilized: “Cohabitation here is quite good. People respect each other but if people see you all the time in the neighborhood their consideration for you changes. As I and my ex-combatant friends see each other almost every day (most of us have no work) people can later on marginalize us and suspect us of everything because we have no work. On the other hand, we are after all leaders here in the community. We contribute a lot to resolving conflicts, before they get to the commune level.”
- 23 year old *rabatteur de bus*: “There is peace now and a quite good cohabitation but with our past, when you are always hanging out in the street and people see you without work, if something happens you are always suspected. Whether they tell you or not, his is how it is. When you have new pants, people think you stole it somewhere, and that hurts.”

So, here again, is the image of young unemployed men as dangerous, likely criminals. Once again, I believe that, while there are of course people for whom this is a correct analysis of actual facts, this is more of a general image that prevails about all marginal young men—that they are criminals, lazy, drunk, good for nothings. This image is sometimes true, but it is not the entire story about young men’s lives, whether ex-combatants or not.

People fear these young ex-combatants for another reason as well, although this was never said to me: it is widely believed that many of them are informants and part-time employees for dirty jobs for the Intelligence

Services and other parallel networks of power. Any reading of Human Rights Watch reporting confirms that the *Documentation* does indeed subcontract to a small group of poor ex-combatants—evidently, exact data on this are entirely absent. And everyone in Bujumbura is sure that many ex-combatants—again, totally impossible to know how many—are informants. Some of my translators were afraid of talking to them, a palpable fear I had to respect. It is of course totally impossible to get a sense of how many ex-combatants engage in this. However, this does not contribute to social insertion of ex-combatants, on all of whom may weigh the suspicion of being informers and potential killers.

Another set of problems that are not addressed are psychological ones. A number of ex-soldiers spoke to us about trauma. One ex-CNDD (Nyangoma) soldier told us that “as a result of the war, I have a hard heart, so that, even if I see ignoble acts before me to an exaggerated degree, it does not touch my heart;” two ex-FAB told us they were psychologically “hardened” by the war. Two persons—a self-demobilized man and a soldier, both CNDD/FDD—told us they suffered from mental illness. Two other ex-combatants also complained about how difficult it was to take up family life again after all these years as a fighter. But overwhelmingly, among the demobilized, people did not talk about socio-psychological problems¹².

Note, however, that strictly none of the 63 persons I spoke to mentioned any major crimes during the war. Like the Clinton policy on gay soldiers, I did not ask, and they did not tell. Given how widespread war crimes were at all sides, clearly at least some of the people I interviewed hid major elements of their past from me—as they possibly did from themselves. All of this is not surprising, but it does remind me that I did obviously not capture all the depths and levels of the lives of my interviewees. Some issues that are very private and/or painful escaped me.

The social reintegration of ex-combatants, then, is certainly not easy or perfect. There is initial fear by neighbors. There is concern—not entirely unfounded—about the behavior of ex-rebels, who have spent too many years in the bush using violence as their only

¹² This mirrors observations in Sierra Leone, where Stavrou [et al. 2003: 39] found that “contrary to expectations, ex-combatants displayed few psycho-social difficulties”.

currency. There are clichés about all ex-soldiers being petty thieves. There is undoubtedly some jealousy out there. There are demobilized who are traumatized and do not manage to meaningfully adapt themselves to society. Other demobilized certainly have maintained often illegal and violent relations with the *Documentation*. Many of these older and younger men are tough men, with a streak of violence, and it is understandable people fear them.

On the other hand, some are respected in their communities as liberators or as defenders. They have seen more of the world, and they are proud of it. They are frequently asked to advice on local conflicts. Their voices are important when it comes to talking to other youth who may think about joining armed groups—they can credibly discourage them from doing so, or not! As they tend to be a rather politicized bunch, they play visible local political roles: they are asked for advice on political matters, or matters pertaining to the administration—and, having talked to some of these guys, I imagine that they may well spout their advice even if they are not asked first! Many of them are doing economically well, and are part of the economic fabric of their societies. Some of them are elected in *conseils collinaires*.

The ex-combatants generally have a strong *esprit de corps* and personal relations among themselves. Both in the urban neighborhoods and the rural *collines*, these people blatantly know each other well and often hang out together: whenever we found one ex-combatant, we often found a multitude! This social capital is surely something they value in life, but it can have drawbacks as well. First, they may be overly identified as ex-combatants, always hanging out together, separate from other people, maintaining a different primary identity, which could harm their reintegration. Second, there is likely a certain degree of social control among them. In interviews in an urban neighborhood, for example, we initially had to organize the interviews two-by-two, so that at least one other person could hear what the other was saying. Only after a day or so of working this way was enough confidence established for us to continue on a one-by-one basis. This reflected in large part initial mistrust about us, outsiders, for sure, but also, to some extent, social control between them.

Re-reading the interviews in their entirety, I am struck, here too, by the few differences between the demobilized soldiers and their peers in their communities. They have the same dreams, face the same constraints, have the same attitudes, etc. In rural areas, they talk with the same frequency and intensity about the same agriculture problems as do their neighbors, they make the same analyses about rural life, and they have the same dreams for the future. As we said earlier, when they “fall in money,” they do the same things their non-combatant neighbors dream of doing. In urban areas, pretty much the same holds, although the variation is bigger: between demobilized ex-FAB officers and self-demobilized FNL youth, for example, there is a giant chasm, which makes generalizations much harder if not impossible. But what I can say is that the ex-combatants pretty much talk and think and feel like—well, like their neighbors.

All in all, then, this suggests that, for many of the ex-combatants, their prime identities are foremost those of farmer, trader, urban upper class or lower class, etc. The years of fighting were an interlude in their normal live paths, but not the defining characteristics of their life. But there are counter-dynamics as well, and people who fall at the other side of the equation. We already observed that there is strong social capital and ongoing networks between ex-combatants wherever we went. While this may be an emotional support to them, it is also potentially a social limitation. Second, among the child soldiers and the self-demobilized—two groups of people on the average significantly younger than the regular adult demobilized soldiers—a sense of injustice, of grievance, of suffering for nothing, of disrespect, prevailed. It is also among the self-demobilized that we found many people without plans, depressed and angry. For them, it seems, their identities are profoundly enmeshed with having been soldiers. I suspect a correlation between age and identity here: the older people more frequently had strong prior identities and associated activities and networks. They were farmers, husbands, etc. before the war, and they returned to this afterwards. This undoubtedly also applies to some of the younger soldiers, too, but less so. For many of the young ones, the situation seems different. Having become soldiers at a young age—having suffered a hard life, seen and done awful things—defines who they are now. For most of them, this is mixed up with or made

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worse by, a sense of neglect and disrespect. This group may present a much bigger risk for peace in Burundi.

The main difference between ex-combatants everywhere and those who did not fight is a higher degree of politicization among the former. They talk more frequently, more easily, and more critically about politics — whether to laud the current government or to condemn it. They more often chose a political figure among those they admire. They talk more about local governance as well, and about justice, and about the war. In more than one-third of the conversations with ex-combatants, current national politics was spontaneously discussed—a far higher proportion than Burundians did on the average. And this occurred as much in rural as in urban areas.

It isn't that they all say the same things—far from it: there are major divisions, both between Hutu and Tutsi and within these groups—but rather simply that they are more inclined to talk to us about blatantly political things. This seems to hold foremost for those combatants who fought at the Hutu side, whether it is to support or to criticize the current government. Indeed, many more ex-rebels spoke about politics to us than did ex-FAB—maybe a sign of the former feeling at ease talking about politics, feeling they are in the winning side, that they have the winds of history behind them. Note, however, that the majority of those ex-combatants who addressed current political matters voiced a negative opinion. Not unexpectedly, this includes all 6 the ex-FAB soldiers who spoke out, but also 17 more ex-rebels, from all movements.

Part 3: Conclusions

Young men joined the war for different reasons. Some joined for proactive reasons—ideology, a political agenda: they did so exclusively at the side of the rebels. Others joined for reactive reasons—to earn money in the absence of other jobs or to defend themselves in situations of insecurity. They were strongly represented at the side of the FAB, although they did exist at the rebel side as well. They often joined later, when the war was already well underway. Force was used by both sides, but the rebels more frequently integrated these people into their structures, whereas the army left them outside its structure. A factor often discussed in the general literature about soldiering—the attractiveness, the machismo, of being a soldier—had as good as no importance.

The majority of them wanted to stop fighting. This was the case because they had suffered too much, had become wounded, or felt that they had won and it was time to move back to normal life. The reasons the self-demobilized gave were pretty much identical: a number of them, however, also spoke about internal purges and fights for power which they were fleeing.

The DDR program in Burundi has worked rather well. This can be seen clearly in my interviews. Most people express themselves with happiness about what they used the funds for; they eagerly await the actual reintegration assistance. The biggest problem by far was the tardiness in the implementation of the second part of the program, but not the actual design of the program. This can also be observed indirectly. One of my standard questions with all interviewees was to inquire about the plans, the projects, of the interviewee. In my experience, people with no plans are systematically those who are worst off, or who perceive themselves to be worst off. They often feel paralyzed. They do not think of the future, or they do not think they have a future. Out of the 53 ex-combatants for whom I have the info, 35 have plans, and 18 do not. The latter group includes 11 self-demobilized,

who very much define themselves by their exclusion and unrecognized suffering as well as 3 child soldiers. Among the remainder, the overwhelming majority of people have plans—and thus, a sense of future. The DDR program, I am sure, has something to do with that. Look at it this way. Among the self-demobilized, i.e., all people who received no DDR assistance, 60% have no plans, no sense of future; among the demobilized, only 15% or is in that situation. I believe there is good reason to attribute this difference to the DDR program.

This brings me to question the requirement for in-kind support of the reintegration project assistance. Of course there will be some people who will misuse cash, but a) we cannot play paternal state for everyone just because some will do the wrong thing, and b) the in-kind nature of these programs is ultimately a partial sham in any case, for two reasons. First, like with discussions about the macro-economic impact of development assistance to countries, the fungibility issue is hard to avoid, i.e., people may simply use the aid to undertake investments they would have made in any case. As a result, they save cash somewhere else. Second, and more frequent, is the fact that, like with food aid (another in-kind assistance), people may receive the aid in kind and turn around and sell it—monetize it, in other terms—once the donor has turned his heels. Field workers in the Burundian demobilization program told me they could pick out these people right away, and there are very many of them: they are not interested in the details or the management of the investment, but simply in getting as much “stuff” as possible, so they can re-sell it soon afterwards. In short, it is hard to assure that in-kind support really ends up supporting what project designers think it will.

At the same time, there is a significant management cost associated with the in-kind nature of these programs. Conversations with managers of such programs in Burundi bring me to estimate this cost at approx. 20% of the value of the benefits distributed. My personal

Part 3: Conclusions

suggestion is that one would be better off simply increasing the benefits by 20% and dropping the in-kind nature.

That said, the funds received so far did clearly not have the same impact on different groups of ex-combatants. From our interviews and the quantitative data available to us, it seems the impact of the DDR funds so far depends on many variables.

The first major distinction is urban vs. rural. The funds went much further in rural areas than in urban ones. Everything costs less in rural areas—housing, food, etc. Social pressures or expectations are lower in rural areas too. At the same time, most of the people returning to rural areas move back into the family farm, either as a child of the home or, for those already married, as the *chef de menage*. The impact of that is dual. First, they do not need to pay rent—something which many urban demobs need to do. Second, there is immediate work for them, and immediate income—not much, maybe, but a basis to live on, which can then be complemented by some fresh off-farm income if one smartly invests one's demobilization payments.

The second major variable is migratory situation. Indeed, there is a major distinction between demobilized who return to families that stayed at home and those whose families are themselves returnees, whether from abroad (repatriated refugees) or from an IDP camp. Logically, all those who returned to an already established family house had it easier than those who had to build their houses. As a result of our research design, this distinction largely coincided with an Ngozi vs. Nyanza-Lac one: in Nyanza-Lac, there simply are overwhelming numbers of recent returnees (that is why we chose to do research there in the first place). As said earlier, people in Nyanza-Lac do appreciate having the funds to rebuild their houses and survive while the land is not yet producing, but it *does* mean they are not capable of investing as much in productive activities.

The third variable is economic situation of the families the demobs return to. In those families where there are major urgent needs—sick family members, people imprisoned in the hospital, generalized extreme poverty, etc.—the funds they received went right away to address these urgent needs: it is impossible for any Burundian

who has 100,000 francs in his pocket to not satisfy these family needs. This holds in rural and in urban areas. Vice versa, a demobilized who returns into a family that still has a decent house and can feed him, can invest all his payments into some project—buying a video player and TV, for example, and creating a movie theater; or buying an electrical shaver and opening a barbershop. A fortiori, an ex-FAB officer who returns to a home he owns, a wife with a job, and children with university degrees is in a vastly better position still. Hence, the sort of family situation an ex-combatant returns to makes a lot of difference in terms of his potential for economic reintegration, especially in the city where the costs of living are high.

Age seems to be a variable underlying some of this, or at least interacting with all the previous. As said, urban combatants in our sample tended to be younger and unmarried; more of the rural ones were older and married. The latter generally did better: is it because they have more assets—land, family members (i.e., labor to work the land), a house? Is it because, being older, they have a greater sense of responsibility and more maturity? Is it because, having being married but away from home, they have independent wives who know how to support their families, for they have done it for years already? Is it, at least for Nyanza-Lac (where we found most of the older ones), because there simply are more economic opportunities available? Is it a varying combination of all these factors?

The fifth variable is health. A significant proportion of ex-combatants are handicapped as a result of the war; PNDRR estimates their number at more than 4,000. They cannot use an arm or a leg anymore; they lost a limb; they don't hear anymore; they have mental illnesses. I encountered such ex-combatants in all the communes I worked in, rural and urban. Their situation is always much more difficult than their peers', at whatever level of income, for they cannot easily work anymore. The PNDRR provides supplemental services to these people; I did not hear anything about it in my conversations, however.

Finally, gender is in all likelihood an important factor as well, but as I met only three women, two of which were self-demobilized, there is really nothing I can say about this.

One final remark. The administrative delays that are taking place with the actual reintegration assistance are temporary, but provoke a lot of unhappiness. For some, such as many young men in the city, any delay has serious repercussions, as the support is absolutely required for them to have any hope to escape from total misery, and any delay puts them further into debt. In addition, these are often angry and cynical people, who are well organized. They see their commanders living a very good life, building houses and investing in business, while they themselves cannot even get the little bit of money promised to them—after years without salary, often—and they are just not in the mood to be patient and wait for that administrative issues to settle themselves, a year or two after they were promised. They don't trust it, they think they have been had, once again, and they won't patiently wait—and as a result, they have scared the hell out of the agencies that are running the DDR program as sub-contractors.

As for the social reintegration, it seems to be conventional wisdom that, as the Peace-Building Commission wrote just a few months ago “Given the difficult socio-economic environment, reintegration of combatants into local communities will add to social tensions.” (2006: 9, referring to the Fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Burundi, 21 November 2005, S/2005/728, p. 6) However, we did not find much evidence of this occurring. Evidently, there are tensions. But Burundians seem, in this and other respects, amazingly capable of accepting wayward sheep into the fold, of integrating people into the community. Most people, young and old, lived again where they used to live when they joined the war. The risk with ex-combatants is not so much that their presence will exacerbate social tensions, but that, given the continued poverty of the urban ex-combatants, they will easily be recruited again by any politician with designs to destabilize the peace. They will not by themselves cause war in Burundi—that has always come from above—but they can become willing participants. Interestingly, this unhappiness and this potential “recruitability” is certainly as big if not bigger at the victorious Hutu side than at the Tutsi side. Indeed, in places like Kamenge or Kanyosha, there are hundreds if not thousands of ex-combatants, including a great many self-demobilized ones, who feel excluded: after all these years of fighting, is this what they fought for—that the politicians build big villas in

the posh neighborhoods while they are as unemployed and marginal as they were before? The sense of betrayal is palpable, especially in the deeply neglected poor urban neighborhoods—it is shared, for that matter, by combatants and non-combatants alike. But that is not the same as saying that their social reintegration is by itself problematic, or that the DDR program is badly designed. That said, in terms of design suggestions, I think the program should try to find how to deal with a few very tough problems: the issue of how to support the reintegration of the self-demobilized; the issue of how to eliminate the lengthy administrative delays in disbursing the promised reintegration support; and the issue of what options exist for better meeting the needs of urban and rural beneficiaries through assistance specialized to their contexts. I realize these are tough issues, but it may be possible to work creatively on them.

Part 4: Annexes

Annex 1. Master table all ex-combatants interviewed

To ensure maximum confidentiality, I have identified all interviews in the different communes of Bujumbura mairie as simply Bujumbura.

Commune	Age	Mar. Stat.	Profession	Educ.	Econ. status	Milit.	recr. year	Recr. age
Child Soldiers								
Busiga	18	1	Bicycle taxi /Farmer	0	1	CNDD/FDD	2001	13
Ruhororo	18	1	Boutique	3	2	FAB	1999	11
Ruhororo	18	1	Farmer	4	2	FAB		
Ruhororo	19	1	Farmer	1	1	FAB	2001	14
Nyanza-Lac	25	1	Farming/Barber	4	2	FAB (Gardien...)		
Bujumbura	19	1	Seller of clothes	3	2	FAB		
Bujumbura	18	1	Groom	5	1	CNDD/FDD	2000	12
Bujumbura	18	1	Woodworker	4	3	CNDD/FDD	1997	9
Bujumbura	19	1	Groom	5	2	CNDD/FDD	1998	10
Demobilized								
Busiga	28	2	Trade	13	3	CNDD/FDD		
Busiga	28	2	Farmer/Small Trade	5	3	CNDD/FDD	1994	16
Busiga	43	2	Farmer/boutique	6	3	CNDD/FDD		
Busiga	30	2	Farmer/Trade	6	3	FAB		
Ruhororo	47	2	Farming	6	3	FAB	1980	21
Ruhororo	50	2	Farming	6	3	FAB	1980	24
Ruhororo	26	1	Farming	4	1	FAB		
Ruhororo	33	2	Animals/Bicycle taxi	6	3	FAB		
Ruhororo	32	2	Shopkeeper/ Bicycle taxi		3	FAB		
Ruhororo	32	2	Farmer/Husbandry	6	3	CNDD/FDD	1994	21
Nyanza-Lac	37	2		0	1	CNDD/FDD		

Nyanza-Lac	30	2	Mason/farming	3	2	CNDD		
Nyanza-Lac	28	2	Farming	0	2	CNDD/FDD		
Nyanza-Lac	32	2	Farmer	6	2	Kaze-FDD	1997	23
Nyanza-Lac	47	2	Farming	6	2	CNDD	1994	35
Nyanza-Lac	52	2	Farming	3	2	CNDD	1994	40
Nyanza-Lac	38	2	Farming	3	2	CNDD	1995	27
Nyanza-Lac	25	2	Farming	5	2	Kaze-FDD	1995	13
Nyanza-Lac	56	2	Farming	6	1	CNDD	1994	44
Nyanza-Lac	42	2	Farming	5	3	CNDD/FDD	1999	35
Nyanza-Lac	34	2	Farming		2	CNDD/FDD Mil-Comb	1995	23
Bujumbura	31	1	Unemployed	3	2	FAB	1996	21
Bujumbura		1	Unemployed		1	FAB	1999	> 18
Bujumbura	52	2	Unemployed	9	2	FAB		
Bujumbura	36	2	Mechanic	13	2	FAB	1990	20
Bujumbura	56	2	Public secretary	13	3	FAB	1974	24
Bujumbura	55	2	Trader	15	4	FAB		
Bujumbura	47	2	Mechanic	12	4	FAB	1980	
Bujumbura	51	2	Unemployed	10	4	FAB	1976	21
Bujumbura	28	1	Shoe seller	6	2	CNDD/FDD	1994	16
Bujumbura	28	div	Unemployed	5	1	CNDD/FDD	1995	17
Bujumbura	28	1	Driver	7	1	CNDD/FDD	1995	17
Auto-demobilized								
Busiga	33	2	Head of Local Administration	6	2	CNDD/FDD		
Bujumbura	17	1	Unemployed		1	FNL	2000	11
Bujumbura	26	2	Driver	8	2	CNDD/FDD	1996	16
Bujumbura	23	1	Barber	4	1	CNDD/FDD	1995	12
Bujumbura	25	1	Bus Conductor	6	1	CNDD/FDD	1994	13
Bujumbura	23	1	Barber	3	1	CNDD/FDD		
Bujumbura	27	1	Manager	13	1	CNDD/FDD	1996	17
Bujumbura	23	1	Bus Conductor	6	1	CNDD/FDD	1996	13
Bujumbura	27	div	Unemployed	7	1	CNDD/FDD	1994	15
Bujumbura	22	2	Student		1	FNL	1997	13
Bujumbura	34	1	Unemployed	13	2	FAB	1996	24
Bujumbura	23	1	Bar server, farmer	4	2	CNDD/FDD	1998	15
Bujumbura		1	Unemployed			FAB		16

Bujumbura	23	1	Barber		1	CNDD/FDD	1996	13
Bujumbura	25	1	Security guard	9	2	FAB	1997	16
Bujumbura	24	1	Security guard	6	2	FAB	1998	16
Bujumbura	28	1	Store owner	10	3	CNDD/FDD	1995	17
Bujumbura	17	1	Unemployed	6	1	FNL	2002	13
Bujumbura	21	1	Mason aid	0	1	FNL	2000	15
Bujumbura	21	1	Unemployed	9	1	FNL	1999	14
Bujumbura	23	1	Unemployed	13	2	FNL	2002	19
Integrated								
Ruhororo	28	1	Chef de Poste	14	4	CNDD/FDD		
Bujumbura	28	2	Soldier		2	CNDD/FDD	NA	NA

Italics are women

Mar. Stat. = Marriage status. 1= single; 2 =married

Ed. = educational attainment, from 0 years to 17 years for complete university studies

Ec. = economic status, from 1 = indigent to 4 = rich.
 Recr. Year = Recruitment year
 Recr. Age = recruitment age

Annex 2. Sampling

Of the 63 ex-combatants interviewed, 6 lived in Busiga, 10 in Ruhororo, 12 in Nyanza-Lac, and 35 in Bujumbura city. Each commune I worked in is bigger than the previous one, and not surprisingly, I found and interviewed more ex-combatants in each successive commune as well. However, there is no denying that Bujumbura city is under-sampled, and so, to a lesser extent, is Nyanza-Lac.

The total number of people demobilized by mid-Sept. 2006 (when I was doing my research) was 18,171 adults (incl. 494 women) and 3,015 children. The three provinces I worked in—Bujumbura mairie, Makamba, and Ngozi—belong to the top-5 largest provinces in terms of demobilization in Burundi (they occupy positions 2, 4 and 5 resp.; Bururi and Bubanza are the remaining ones).

	Child soldier	Demobilized	Self-demobilized	Integrated	Total ex-combatants interviewed	Total demobs per commune
Busiga	1	4	1	0	6	103
Ruhororo	3	6	0	1	10	164
Nyanza-Lac	1	11	0	0	12	260
Kamenge	1	3	9	1	14	295
Musaga	1	4	5	0	10	302
Bwiza	2	1	0	0	3	102
Other Bujumb.	0	3	5	0	8	
Total	8	33	20	2	63	

Source: last column is PNDRR data, Nov. 14, 2006

I interviewed 9 child soldiers, 32 demobilized soldiers, 2 who were integrated into either the police or the army, and 20 so-called self-demobilized (all except one in the capital city of Bujumbura). This over-samples on child soldiers. Also, the category of auto-demobilized in Bujumbura is probably over-sampled (I say probably because there are no data available on how many auto-demobilized there are, and thus I cannot be sure if by chance the proportions aren't correct¹³).

	Child soldier	Demobilized	Auto-demobilized	Integrated	Total	PNDRR demob.
CNDD/FDD	4	11	9	2	26	7,050
CNDD	0	5	0	0	5	1,397
KAZE-FDD	0	2	0	0	2	364
FAB	5	14	4	0	23	8,173
FNL	0	0	6	0	6	283
Total	9	32	19	2	62	
Last column = total demobilized by PNDRR on Sept. 15, 2006						

Of my interview sample, 26 persons were CNDD/FDD, 5 from CNDD, and 2 from KAZE-FDD. There are four persons who just identified themselves as PMPA and I put those under CNDD/FDD, so I might be slightly off in these figures. Twenty-three of my interviewees were ex-FAB, and 6 ex-FNL (all self-demobilized, as only a few FNL-Icanzo soldiers had been formally demobilized at the time of my interviews).

That said, while my interview sample may not be weighed correctly in function of the national distributions, I do strongly believe that I did get the stories of each category of ex-combatant right, for I have enough in-depth qualitative data, and they are sufficiently coherent, to be able to draw clear trends. In other words, I do have a decent sense of the general situation of demobilized soldiers, and the clear differences that exist between these people living in the North, the South, and the capital. Similarly, I do have a good sense of the specific problems faced by urban self-demobilized. And I can compare all these data with my overall data for the rest of the Burundian population living in these same places.

Finally, 3 of the 63 interviewees are women. This, too, reflects the PNDRR proportion of 2.63% of all demobs being female. One is a demobilized woman who had been taken by force by the CNDD/FDD and married another rebel in Nyanza-Lac; the two others are self-demobilized FNL combatants who joined voluntarily (if this is a term one can use for girls who were 12 and 13 years old when they joined) and now live in Bujumbura rural.

¹³ Lancaster 2006: 6 observes but does not explain an interesting discrepancy in data. He writes that in 2002, the total number of child soldiers in Burundi was estimated at 14,000. By late 2005, UNICEF said it had demobilized all of them, *i.e.*, about 3,000. Whence the difference? I would argue that part of the difference resides in the fact that there may well be thousands of self-demobilized children in Burundi.

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