

Workshop on Post-Conflict Demobilization in Africa

Issues Paper¹

To date, there have been relatively few demobilization and reintegration programs, and no completely successful experiences to draw upon. However, although most demobilization experiences are either too recent to permit retrospective analysis or are on-going, some lessons have been learned and some key issues identified. The workshop is intended to provide an opportunity to share experiences and discuss some of the lessons learned, with a view to promoting a better understanding of the complexities of post-conflict demobilization and reintegration in Africa, and of the issues which need to be addressed. It is hoped that it will thus contribute to the effective design and implementation of future demobilization and reintegration programs.

This brief issues paper is not intended to provide general background information on demobilization and reintegration, or to discuss specific demobilization and reintegration programs. It does not cover all the issues which are relevant to a discussion of post-conflict demobilization and reintegration. Rather, it provides a brief discussion of some of the topics which will be raised during the course of the workshop in order to stimulate discussion.

A Demobilization as a conflict management issue

Discussion

Demobilization and reintegration can be undertaken either immediately following conflict, or at a later date. While many of the stages are the same in both cases, the climate in which the process takes place is fundamentally different, and requires that greater or less emphasis be placed on various components. Equity issues are more acute in immediate post-conflict demobilization, and are likely to arise over the numbers to be demobilized, the size, structure and composition of the army of national reconciliation, and the benefits offered to demobilized ex-combatants relative to those provided to civilian populations. Post-conflict military re-structuring consequent upon demobilization often also requires military training to accommodate considerable differences in educational background, institutional familiarity and military experience of members of the newly-formed army of national reconciliation.

Although post-conflict demobilization is essentially a political issue, it still needs to be conducted effectively and efficiently, if security is to be maintained. Delays in implementation can jeopardize the whole peace process, or result in armed ex-combatants resorting to banditry. Programs which are too ambitious can fall apart because insufficient funds are provided or funds are not provided in a timely manner, or because they are too complex to be administered effectively. Conversely, the danger of general civil insecurity and banditry is compounded if ex-combatants do not feel that they have been fairly treated and adequately rewarded for their years of service.

Issues What lessons have been learned to date about how demobilization can facilitate or impede other conflict management efforts? What issues need to be taken into consideration when designing demobilization and reintegration programs? How can monitoring of demobilization and reintegration programs be linked with other on-going conflict management efforts?

1 This paper is intended as a background document for the workshop, and does not represent the views of either the OAU or the GCA.

B Peace agreements and post-conflict demobilization and reintegration as part of national reconstruction

Discussion

In immediate post-conflict situations demobilization and reintegration are likely to be conditions of peace agreements. As peace agreements are essentially political compromises, they often set unrealistic timetables for subsequent activities, and do not discuss design or implementation issues. Additionally, donor funding which may be pledged in support of peace agreements frequently cannot be made available immediately. However, incomplete demobilization threatens the peace process itself, while hastily implemented demobilization with inadequate attention to reintegration can create longer-term civil security issues.

Tensions between the need for political compromise during peace negotiations and well-planned, realistic demobilization programs are often exacerbated by the fact that those persons involved in peace negotiations tend not to be those responsible for designing and implementing demobilization programs. On the donor side too, the agencies involved in the two processes tend to be different and there is frequently insufficient dialogue between them, resulting in misunderstanding about what is feasible. The net result is often a lack of understanding, on the part of those involved in peace negotiations, about both the time and money required for adequate demobilization and reintegration. This is matched, on the part of those charged with designing and implementing demobilization programs, with a lack of awareness of the political realities which go into getting a peace agreement. Greater dialogue about demobilization programs during the process of peace agreements would help, as would provision for the details and timetable of demobilization components to be worked out separately. From the donor side, special, quick-disbursing funds would also help avoid damaging delays. It would be useful if planning for demobilization could begin as early as possible and include all parties who would be involved in program implementation. However, programs should not begin until the political context is conducive to their implementation.

Peace agreements obviously are also concerned with national reconstruction following conflict, and the whole process of military restructuring, demobilization and reintegration has to be seen in this wider political context. However, as with all programs, there is a danger that attention can be focused on the specifics of the programs, and the wider context lost sight of. While demobilization and reintegration have to be completed, there has also to be some equity in treating other war-affected groups, such as displaced persons and refugees. In internal conflict, particularly when it has continued for some time, it is unlikely that any sector of the population will have been unaffected. Care therefore has to be taken to ensure that demobilization and reintegration packages do not create the impression that soldiers are somehow being rewarded, while others continue to suffer.

Issues There have now been a number of demobilization and reintegration programs implemented as components of peace agreements in Africa. What can be drawn from such experiences to facilitate the design and implementation of future programs? Is greater coordination between those entities involved with peace negotiations and those responsible for designing demobilization and reintegration programs possible? If so, how can it be fostered? Is it possible for donors to develop mechanisms for quick disbursement of funds, or to provide assistance early in the process?

C National and regional security requirements for effective demobilization

Discussion

The cessation of hostilities due to a peace agreement does not necessarily mean that conflicts have been resolved, or that peace and security will be established and maintained. A number of other, on-

going conflict management and confidence-building efforts usually need to be undertaken over quite a long period of time before either of these are even possible. No party to a conflict will feel secure about disarming and demobilizing troops unless and until it is assured that the other party or parties will also disarm and demobilize.

Regional security is also affected by the fact that demobilized ex-combatants from one country can become mercenaries in other conflicts, and that arms can be transported across borders and fuel other internal conflicts. Regional security arrangements could help build confidence. Agreements to control cross-border arms traffic are important, as are agreements to develop adequate in-country legislation and penalties for illegal possession of arms. Regional cooperation to develop conflict management mechanisms and peacekeeping arrangements could also be very useful.

Internal security, in the sense that politically organized armed conflict is avoided, can usually be established if formerly opposing factions agree to elections which guarantee some form of political inclusion. However, more general civil security requires a variety of measures that protect the civilian population. Such measures, which include adequate legislation, a functioning legal system, a trained a-political police force, and civilian control over the military, cannot be put in place immediately.

Issues What constitutes an adequate regional and national security environment conducive to demobilization, and how can this be developed? What are the possibilities of regional cooperation on these issues? What can be done to promote and maintain internal civil security following conflict?

D Disarmament and disposition of arms

Discussion

The ready availability of arms is one of the major reasons why conflict in Africa in the recent past has been both so devastating and so long-lasting. Given that in many cases opposing forces have been unable to adequately take and defend clearly demarcated areas, internal conflicts in Africa have generally taken their greatest toll on civilian populations. Not only have vast numbers of innocent people been killed, but many more have been displaced, lost their livelihood, psychologically traumatized and physically injured. Compounding the problem, landmines continue to kill and maim after ceasefires have been agreed by opposing factions, and small arms become a lucrative source of both trade and banditry in fragile economies.

Disarmament is a pre-requisite for peace, and a cornerstone of demobilization programs, and yet probably the most difficult aspect to effectively accomplish. It is almost impossible to achieve complete disarmament, particularly in post-conflict situations, in part because it is almost impossible to establish the number and type of weapons in circulation. Effective disarmament requires the cooperation of political and military leaders, which depends on both their willingness to accept the terms of peace agreements and their belief that opposing forces will also abide by them. It also requires that military leadership has control over combatants. However, as weapons are not always well regulated or accounted for, it also depends on individuals, many of whom may see possession of a weapon as an insurance policy in the face of uncertainty. This is compounded by the "arms culture" which frequently develops over long periods of conflict.

It is unlikely that the encampment and disarmament phases of demobilization programs will result in all, or even the vast majority of weapons being reclaimed. Even if this component is relatively successful, ineffective monitoring during encampment can mean that reclaimed weapons find their way onto the black market or back into ex-combatants' hands. Additional measures therefore are required to try to ensure security. Various experiments have been conducted -- weapons buy-back programs, search

and seizure of arms, amnesty programs which allow for the return of weapons with no questions asked -- all with varying degrees of success. Establishing a legal and normative environment which provides both punishment and censure for possession of weapons is essential for effective disarmament and demilitarization of societies, but this is almost impossible to achieve in the short-term for countries in the aftermath of conflict.

Issues What has been learned to date about disarmament components of demobilization programs? What lessons are there from amnesty or gun buy-back programs? Based on past experience, what should be avoided or encouraged, and how can some of the problems inherent in these programs best be addressed?

E Financial, political, and social dimensions of demobilization and reintegration at the national level

Discussion

Demobilization and reintegration programs have to be seen in the macro-economic, political and social context of the country in which they are being implemented. Although different programs may have similar components, the outcome, especially of reintegration, is likely to vary because of country-specific circumstances. However well-designed, demobilization and reintegration programs cannot be successful in the long term unless ex-combatants can be productive and contribute to economic growth.

It is often assumed that provision of training will permit ex-combatants to be absorbed into the workforce, or become productive farmers or small scale entrepreneurs. However, in reality, productive employment cannot be guaranteed, even with skills-training, in times of economic depression and high unemployment, issues of land tenure and land use, producer prices, and access to inputs and markets affect ex-combatants as much as other farmers, and an enabling environment is required before private sector activity can develop. In the past, demobilized soldiers could more easily be absorbed into the public sector, but increasingly governments are trying to cut spending, reduce the number of public sector employees, and either privatize state enterprises or make them more financially viable. As a result, the economic climate for demobilization and reintegration is frequently difficult, and yet special treatment of demobilized ex-combatants is neither politically or socially feasible, nor economically sustainable.

Demobilization and reintegration programs are costly, especially when large numbers are involved or when ex-combatants have unrealistically high expectations, particularly in post-conflict situations. The financial costs of demobilization are also likely to be higher the more senior officers are involved, as they tend to expect better retrenchment packages or employment opportunities than other ranks. Most countries do not have the resources to meet the costs of demobilization and reintegration, unless these resources are diverted from elsewhere. Substantial donor funding is therefore required, but donors also have limited funds. Additionally, substantial external assistance is required for general post-conflict reconstruction, including resettlement of displaced persons and refugees.

Socially, demobilization is not always popular, and special programs for the demobilized can cause resentment, particularly following civil strife, when civilian populations have suffered greatly. And yet, unemployed, discontented and impoverished demobilized soldiers present a greater threat to civil security than other population groups. For this reason, community-centered reintegrated programs have advantages over specially-targeted programs, but do not always live up to the expectations of the ex-combatants. Additionally, demobilization and reintegration have social dimensions, in that families, not just soldiers themselves are affected. Some ex-combatants, such as the disabled and child soldiers, have special needs which cannot be met by a single demobilization package. They tend to face greater reintegration problems than others, and cannot always be easily absorbed by societies whose socio-political fabric has already been strained by years of conflict. However, governments faced with many

14

demands for limited resources can find it difficult to provide adequate social welfare programs to assist such people

Issues These wider economic and social problems obviously cannot be addressed by demobilization and reintegration programs, and yet need to be taken into account. From experience to date, what lessons can be learned to design programs which are financially feasible, which offer the best chance of successful reintegration, and which avoid creating unrealistic expectations? Are there any best practices which can be identified?

F **Design and implementation of country-level demobilization and reintegration programs**

DISCUSSION

Obviously, each country program has to be designed according to the particular needs of country, and taking special circumstances into account. However, there are some general issues which need to be considered, and a number of steps which have to be included in any demobilization and reintegration program. The attached chart (taken from "Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa: Evidence from Seven Country Case Studies", World Bank, October 1993) lays out the stages in a "typical" demobilization and reintegration program. In reality, however, demobilization and reintegration programs tend not to be very easily implemented, and are subject to delays and setbacks.

It is important that ex-combatants are adequately prepared for their return to civilian life, but that their expectations are not unrealistically high. In many instances, particularly when people have spent most of their adult life as combatants, or became combatants at an early age, demobilized soldiers are "institutionalized" and find it difficult to adjust to civilian life. Additionally, while most ex-combatants are men, provision has to be made for demobilization and reintegration of female ex-combatants.

The main stages of demobilization and reintegration programs are (a) negotiation of the number of combatants to be demobilized, definition of criteria governing the selection process, and determination of the size, composition and structure of the resulting national armed force, (b) encampment and disarmament, during which the combatants are housed in designated locations, identified, and disarmed, and during which they participate in training and other programs to equip them (and their families) for a return to civilian life, and (c) release, at which point ex-combatants (and their families) are transported to their final destination, or given their mustering out package which permits them to return to their home area, and following which they participate in any on-going reintegration programs which have been established.

A number of issues have to be taken into consideration at each stage of the process. These include

- the nature and type of training and other rehabilitation programs,
- provision for family members during encampment,
- the nature and content of mustering out packages,
- one-off payments vs phased packages, and community-based vs targeted programs,
- re-integration provision for family members,
- provision for ex-combatants with special needs,
- land tenure and land use,
- landmine clearance and rehabilitation of infrastructure,
- mental and physical health of ex-combatants and family members,
- employment opportunities,
- provision of credit,

- duration of programs and sequencing of benefits,
- acceptance by, and integration into, communities

Adequate monitoring and evaluation of programs is very important, both to ensure effective implementation, and to provide information which could be used in other programs

Issues What lessons have been learned from the design and implementation of demobilization and reintegration programs to date? What mechanisms need to be instituted so that programs can be effectively monitored and evaluated? What constitutes success in terms of demobilization and reintegration programs, and how can this be gauged?

G The role of the international community and mobilization of national and international resources for demobilization

Discussion

An increasing number of countries are likely to seek the help of the international community with demobilization and reintegration, both as part of post-conflict reconstruction and in peacetime. Some of the demobilization and reintegration programs undertaken to date have been very costly in terms of the cost per participant. Given limited donor resources, it is unlikely that such high cost programs will be possible in Africa, particularly if the number of programs increases. It is also probable the countries implementing programs will be expected to meet some of the costs themselves. Additionally, greater emphasis will probably be placed on cost-effectiveness, both in the programs themselves, and in their administration, and on sustainability and impact. There is need, therefore, for realistic, easily implementable, and cost-effective demobilization and reintegration programs.

There is an inherent tension between the fact that demobilization programs are politically sensitive and have to belong to the country implementing them, and yet are largely donor funded. Additionally, because programs require management and oversight, they obviously place a burden on implementing government bureaucratic structures. Ways have to be found of implementing programs without creating large government or donor structures which run the danger of becoming institutionalized. Ways also have to be found to avoid such programs becoming donor-driven, and of ensuring that they are owned by the countries themselves. Donors have to be particularly aware of the political realities of demobilization programs. They also have to be willing to coordinate assistance to minimize funding delays, avoid fragmentation of programs and duplication of effort, and maximize the use of resources.

Although donor coordination is important, it is difficult, especially when the institutional structures of implementing countries are weak. It is also made more difficult by the fact that demobilization and reintegration programs, although part of an interconnected process, require different expertise at different stages (for example, demobilization is an essentially military operation, whereas reintegration efforts are more akin to development programs). If the international community is to become more involved with demobilization and reintegration, it is necessary to decide where the comparative advantage of both bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors lies, and to determine how they can best provide support. It is also necessary to determine what roles exist for local and international non-governmental organizations, and how African capacity in this area can be developed and utilized.

Issues What lessons have been learned from previous programs to help design realistic, implementable, and cost-effective programs and what issues need to be considered? What constitutes cost-effectiveness and how can the cost-effectiveness of demobilization and reintegration programs be gauged? From past experience, how can effective donor coordination be developed?