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Post-war Demobilization and the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life

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Termination of several armed conflicts has in recent years created conversion opportunities—to redirect resources from the military to development purposes. In the past decade, several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America conducted large scale demobilizations after the termination of wars. These are positive signs and might create opportunities for sustainable peace and human development. However, demobilization has shown to be a complex process. It is closely linked to security issues; and the impact of demobilization depends largely on how the ex-combatants² are able to reintegrate into civilian life. This paper provides an overview of recent demobilization experiences and identifies on the bases of these experiences some of the risks and other issues that are involved, and several general lessons that have been learned.

Contexts and Approaches of Demobilization

Several demobilizations—mostly after civil wars—have taken place since the late 1980s in Central America as well as in Africa. The peace processes that started in Central America in the late 1980s led to demilitarization in El Salvador, Nicaragua and—more recently—Guatemala (Spencer, 1997). In a separate process in Haiti, its armed forces were abolished—leaving only about 750 people in the national police and palace guards (Dworken *et al.*, 1997).

Table I. Demobilizations in Central America

El Salvador — 30,000 members of the regular armed forces were demobilized between 1992 and mid-1993; 8,000 Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) opposition forces were demobilized in 1992

Guatemala — 24,000 ‘military commissioners’ were demobilized in September 1996; with the Peace Agreement of December 1996 the government commits itself to reducing the armed forces by 33 per cent in 1997 and full demobilization of the ‘Voluntary Civil Defense Committees’; about 3,600 guerrillas of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) were demobilized in early 1997

Haiti — 6,250 soldiers of the armed forces were demobilized between the re-establishment of the Aristide Presidency in late 1994 and April 1996

Nicaragua — the national (Sandinista) armed forces demobilized 65,000 soldiers between the end of the 1980s and 1992; 23,000 ‘contras’ were demobilized in 1992

Source: BICC data

In Africa, particularly the end of Apartheid and the peace processes in Southern Africa, as well as the fall of the Derg regime in Ethiopia, have created opportunities for several major demobilizations in Southern and East Africa. Also in Asia, Europe and North America some large scale demobilizations have taken place (see BICC, 1996 and 1997), but these will remain outside the scope of this paper.

Table II. Demobilizations in Africa

Angola — a demobilization of about 73,000 ex-combatants of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) has been agreed upon in 1994; after initial progress in encampment and demobilization, the demobilization is seriously in jeopardy; many of the about 20,000 UNITA fighters formally demobilized might still be under UNITA command

Djibouti — 9,000 soldiers are planned to be demobilized

Eritrea — 55,000 ex-fighters of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) have been demobilized since 1993

Ethiopia — almost half a million soldiers of the defeated Derg army were demobilized in 1991; between 1992 and 1994, another 22,200 fighters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were demobilized

Liberia — between November 1996 and February 1997 20,332 fighters have officially disarmed and demobilized, including 4,306 children

Mozambique — 70,000 soldiers of the government forces and 20,000 of the Renamo opposition forces were demobilized in 1992-1994

Namibia — all of the about 30,000 people fighting for South African forces in Namibia and 13,000 combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) were demobilized in 1989

Uganda — 36,350 soldiers were demobilized between the end of 1992 and October 1995

Somalia — several—but thus far largely unsuccessful—demobilization efforts have been made since 1992

Sierra Leone — demobilization plans were shelved after a military coup in May 1997

South Africa — an integration of seven armed forces into the new South African National Defense Force (SANDF) is ongoing since 1994; the demobilization (rationalization) of about 30,000 armed forces personnel is planned

Source: BICC data

Each case of demobilization involves a distinct political and socio-economic context. Decisions to demobilize have been based on specific military, political and socio-economic circumstances. Recent demobilizations in Africa and Central America have been the result of one or more of the following factors (BICC, 1996):

- # A peace accord between fighting parties
- # Defeat of one of the fighting parties
- # Perceived improvement in the security situation
- # Shortage of adequate funding
- # Perceived economic and development impact of conversion
- # Changing military technologies and/or strategies

Although most demobilizations in the past decade occurred after the termination of a violent conflict, the contexts and approaches are rather diverse. To clearly see differences, we can for example look at Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda. In Ethiopia, the defeat of the Derg army in 1991 led to its total demobilization. In Mozambique, the two fighting parties agreed in 1992 to stop fighting, demobilize, and create a much smaller new national army, consisting of volunteers from both parties. In the case of Uganda, armed conflicts had virtually disappeared several years before the demobilization was initiated, and a considerable number of soldiers of the army of the previous regime had already been absorbed in the new National Resistance Army (NRA). The objectives of demobilization in Uganda were threefold: budgetary, social and military (Mondo, 1994). It would lead to a ‘peace dividend’ by significantly reducing military expenditures—and the reallocation of those resources to productive and social priority sectors. The social goal was to resettle ex-soldiers and their families in their home district and reintegrate them peacefully, productively and sustainably. The military objective was to retain a leaner, better-trained and motivated armed force.

Some countries have opted for first unifying and then demobilizing. For example, since the April 1994 general elections in South Africa, the old South African Defense Force (SADF), Umkhonto We Sizwe (armed wing of the ANC), Azanian People’s Liberation Army (armed wing of the Pan-Africanist Congress), and the armies of four former ‘homelands’ (Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda), are being integrated in the new South African National Defense Force (SANDF). Subsequently, the number of people in the SANDF is being reduced. Countries that opt for this sequence appear to consider that the financial costs of maintaining a large army for a longer period are lower than the social and political costs of an expedited demobilization.

Demobilization and Resettlement

The entire process and the institutions involved are different in each case. Generally, once the decision to demobilize is taken, practical plans have to be worked out and financing ensured. The combatants that are to be demobilized are usually brought to assembly areas, where they are registered, disarmed and given an identification card. The disarmament is a very critical procedure as I will elaborate later. In assembly areas they may also receive health care and be assisted with reorientation and counseling. In Uganda, for example, the ex-soldiers and their dependents went through pre-discharge briefings, providing them details on how to open a bank account, how to start income generating activities, environmental and legal issues, family

planning, and AIDS prevention. At time of demobilization, a 'package' in cash and/or kind is usually provided to assist the ex-combatants in the initial stages of resettlement. These may include foodstuffs, civilian clothing, household utensils, building material, seeds or agricultural implements. In Uganda, the package also included the payment of school fees for veteran's children for the period of one year. In some cases, the demobilized receive a cash payment at the time of demobilization and then at subsequent intervals. In Mozambique, the combatants received six months' severance pay at demobilization as well as reintegration subsidies, representing a further 18 months' pay (United Nations, 1995a). Considerable support is often required to transport the ex-combatants to where they will resettle.

One of the constraints for the resettlement of ex-combatants and returnees is caused by landmines in the areas where they would want to resettle. Their exact location is often unknown; and they thus continue to threaten to kill or maim indiscriminately, long after the end of the fighting. The problem is particularly bad in Angola and Mozambique. Estimates of the number of mines in Angola alone range between nine and 20 million. It will take decades and a massive human and financial effort to clear these mines and allow all potential agricultural land to be used.

Reintegration into Civilian Life

Once the ex-combatants are demobilized and have settled together with their families in the area in which they want to begin a new life, the reintegration process starts. Although often at least some support is being provided, most of the effort rests on the shoulders of the ex-combatants and their families. They have to build up a new livelihood. Field level research shows indeed that the reintegration is not one general process, but consists of thousands of *micro-stories*, with individual and group efforts, and with setbacks and successes. Some interesting and useful research has been done at this level, but to really value the distinct circumstances and particularly assess the support received from communities and the role of women in the reintegration process, additional research should focus at specific groups of ex-combatants in specific regions.

Reintegration has economic as well as social aspects. Social reintegration is the process through which the ex-combatant and his or her family feel part of, and are accepted by, the community. The history of the war and the degree of general reconciliation play a role in the way the ex-combatants are received. For example, the demobilized fighters in Eritrea were quite different from the soldiers demobilized in Ethiopia. In Eritrea, they were all very committed and disciplined, and had just ended a war of three decades, victoriously. The population perceived them as the liberators of the country. And they themselves generally trusted their leadership and had patience when required. Some other factors such as rituals and gifts could also play a role. In Mozambique some ex-combatants spent a good part of their initial demobilization money on gifts to village elders. That played an important contribution to being accepted in the village, becoming part of the 'social security' and sometimes being allowed to marry one of the young women in the village. The latter had also important economic implications, because in some regions land is passed on through the female line. Most ex-combatants had to undergo cleansing rituals in order to be

accepted. These rituals have an impact both on the acceptance by the community as well as on the ex-combatants themselves. The Ugandan government made efforts to create a general willingness among the population to help the former soldiers reintegrate into society. Despite the different character and record of the NRA (now called the Uganda People's Defense Force), the history of Uganda in past decades has caused a general fear and disrespect for soldiers. To help overcome these perceptions, the Uganda Veterans Assistance Board conducted campaigns to sensitize soldiers and communities.

Economic reintegration is the process through which the ex-combatant's household builds up its livelihood, through production and/or other types of gainful employment. The economic reintegration is for ex-combatants often difficult in societies where it is already difficult to start an economic activity or find employment. It is important to note that in some cases, such as Uganda, the combatants released are the ones with the worst perspective for reintegration, because of little skills and education, or health problems. Factors such as the availability and accessibility of agricultural land, housing and business space are also often constraints. Despite the above constraints, the experience with reintegration has not always been very negative. Recent research in Ethiopia shows that the ex-soldiers are indeed generally poor, but they are not significantly worse off than civilians in the same location without a military background (Ayalew and Dercon, forthcoming).

Also the status of the (new) armed forces and civil-military relations could play a role in demobilization and reintegration processes. Retraining and reorientation of the armed forces personnel and balancing the ethnic and regional composition of the armed forces might be required. In addition, it might strengthen people's confidence in the future if human rights violations of members of the armed forces are dealt with. But this might create a dilemma. They should be appropriately punished, but heavy punishment might also increase tensions between the military and the rest of society.

Psychological adjustment also appears to be hard—it might be difficult for ex-combatants to adjust their attitudes and expectations. Military personnel and guerrilla fighters are trained in top-down methods of management, which often contradict the appropriate approaches for management and entrepreneurship in the civilian sector. Ex-combatants go through a personal process of adjustment, after losing a predictable environment with a certain social status—positive or negative. They are forced to rethink their ambitions and capabilities. In addition, large numbers of the demobilized suffer from psycho-social problems due to post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, a very high incidence of this disorder is believed to exist among ex-combatants in Angola and Mozambique. Empirical data on this phenomenon is still very limited and the most effective types of counseling or other therapies remain subjects of debate.

Security Risks and Arms Control

After the termination of the violence and at the time of demobilization, there are often two closely related problems with weapons. One is that the (new) governments has large stocks of so-called ‘surplus weapons,’ for which no further need exists. Large amounts of weapons and weapon scrap are often just left to decay, and might thus cause environmental pollution. An even larger danger is that these weapons will be stolen or exported—often to other conflict areas. Indications exist, for example, that weapons from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda have been shipped to the SPLA in Sudan, and large numbers of Ethiopian weapons have ended up in Somalia.

The second security problem exists if the combatants are not properly disarmed and armories not well protected. Weapons might remain or fall in the hands of ex-combatants and other people. The availability of ‘uncontrolled’ light weapons causes dangers at different levels. It increases the risk that disputes between individuals are settled with deadly violence, since most ex-combatants have learned little else than using violence to solve problems. These weapons could also fuel banditry; and political groups could more easily arm themselves and disturb non-violent and democratic political processes. Disarming the soldiers and guerrilla fighters is complicated, since many own more than one weapon. So, if they turn in one, another might be hidden elsewhere.

Large stocks remain often unreported, since the parties might not be entirely sure that the peace will hold—or they might speculate on future income. In El Salvador, arms, munitions, mines and other military equipment of the FMLN opposition forces were turned in to UN observers. Nonetheless, investigations by the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) found after the demobilization over 100 arms depots in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua belonging to the FMLN (United Nations, 1995b). The weapons that were reclaimed by the UN in Mozambique were handed over to the (new) government, but it appeared not to be able to adequately control these weapon stocks. Large numbers of weapons have ended up on the (regional) black market. Former Renamo fighters are blamed for frequent armed attacks on vehicles. Also in El Salvador, the current availability of weapons is said to cause more violence than during the civil war. Nobody really knows the number of weapons in circulation in those countries, and they are often easy to smuggle across national borders. Estimates put the number of weapons in civilian hands in Angola at one million (*Angola Peace Monitor*, vol. II, issue 11). Estimates for Guatemala are about as high.

The way in which the disarmament is implemented differs case by case. It depends particularly on the context: whether the demobilization is after a defeat of one party, right after a peace agreement, or as a result of a decision to reduce the size of the existing army. The disarmament of combatants is not always difficult. In Uganda the weapons were left in the barracks when the soldiers moved to the demobilization centers. In Eritrea, all weapons used by the EPLF had been registered during the war. A complicating factor for disarmament and arms control remains that in some regions, such as the Horn of Africa, ownership of arms is culturally accepted. In some areas a man without a gun is not considered a ‘real man’.

Focusing on the supply of weapons, even in a relatively peaceful situation, might not be the best or only way. Some people argue that the weapons are not the problem, but that the people that would use these weapons are. This demands strengthening of local security arrangements and possible political campaigns, involving community leaders and elders. Others argue however that the availability of weapons militarizes societies and that unrestricted trade of light weapons across borders destabilizes regions (Gamba, 1995).

An additional threat to security after demobilization is caused by ex-combatants trying to apply their skills elsewhere. The use of ex-soldiers as mercenaries in official and private armies is increasing. Many of them originate from armies that have recently contracted. A South African firm, *Executive Outcomes*, is for example known having provided mercenaries to several African countries. It employs mostly ex-members of the former SADF.

Demobilization and Reintegration Policy?

Opportunities, problems and policy issues concerning demobilization and reintegration are receiving increasing attention among governments, international development agencies and NGOs. Also the UN recognizes the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as critical parts of post-war peace-building, and has made it—literally—part of its agenda. It has been highlighted in several major UN policy documents (Boutros-Ghali, 1994, p. 7; and 1995, para. 50) and the *Copenhagen Declaration* adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

Despite the involvement of international agencies with the issue, some people would argue that demobilization is a mere logistical exercise. Soldiers have to be disarmed and brought back to their communities. The rest of the effort comes down to development work in general terms. Some would also argue that it is unfair that ex-combatants receive targeted support. These combatants were the ones that created all the havoc and made development and life impossible for others. Many other groups of people suffered and should be supported in setting up their livelihoods again. We should for example note that when peace returns, ex-combatants are usually not the only group that has to reintegrate. Returning refugees and internally displaced people usually outnumber the ex-combatants. In Mozambique, for example, about 90,000 combatants were demobilized. However, at the time of the cease fire in 1992 it was estimated that about 1.5 million Mozambicans lived as refugees abroad and about 3.5 million were internally displaced.

Indeed, in most efforts to support reintegration, policy makers face a dilemma on whether or not to treat the ex-soldiers and guerrillas as a special target group. Support programs have to strike a balance between dealing with the specific needs of these people and not creating discontent among the rest of their often poor communities and other war-affected groups—which could jeopardize true reintegration³. **It is argued that therefore ex-**

combatants should not receive more support than necessary to help them attain the standard of living of the communities in which they try to reintegrate.

Keeping in mind the above dilemma and the fact that each demobilization is different, I believe that the experience over the past decade has taught us that reintegration of ex-combatants requires support efforts for at least four reasons:

1. Demobilized soldiers and fighters require support from a humanitarian point of view. Upon demobilization, they are out of a job and often away from their home. Therefore, they require the provision of basic needs for some time and physical resettlement.
2. In some cases it can be argued that the demobilized combatants have sacrificed several years of their life to liberate their country and to improve the development perspectives for their compatriots (e.g. EPLF in Eritrea, or MK and APLA in South Africa). In other cases, some of the demobilized might have been recruited into the armed forces under pressure (e.g. Derg army in Ethiopia and the Renamo in Mozambique). In those cases support could be justified as a type of compensation for foregone education or other investment. If on these grounds promises are made and not fully lived up to, this could lead to frustration and unrest, such as currently in Zimbabwe, more than 15 years after demobilization.
3. A third reason why it would make sense to support ex-combatants is because of their potential contribution to the general development in their community, and the country as a whole. Their skills and other capabilities might lead to new employment opportunities (Nübler, 1997). Exposure to other parts of the country and different experiences of ex-combatants might also have a positive impact on development.
4. Lastly, but in some cases most importantly, there is a more negative argument. Lack of attention for the risks involved in demobilization could jeopardize peace-building and human development. Without support, demobilized soldiers and guerrilla fighters might have great difficulties re-establishing themselves in civilian life, and frustrated ex-combatants may threaten the peace and development process by getting involved in criminal activities or violent political opposition. In Nicaragua, for example, at several points in time, groups of ex-soldiers have rearmed themselves and resumed fighting (Spencer, 1997).

Dealing with the specific reintegration issues of demobilized combatants does not imply that policy design had to start from scratch. Experiences with returning refugees and internally displaced people as well as with the retrenchment of public servants within structural adjustment programs contain useful lessons.⁴

Lessons Learned

The diversity of demobilization experiences among countries is so great that drawing general lessons is hazardous. However, with the appropriate care, and always putting demobilization within the broader peace-building and rehabilitation issues, we might draw some general lessons from the available research and other information on demobilization and reintegration—particularly in Africa and Central America.

1) Successful demobilization requires cessation of hostilities, political will and the support of all parties.

Demobilization has little chances to succeed if one of the major parties is not fully committed. One of the main lessons learned from the UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) is that “There must be clear guidelines for disarmament and demobilization, and their activities must be carried out with the agreement of the parties” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung *et al.*, 1995, p. 38). Expectations that the relative power of the fighting factions would continue to be defined by military capability, made significant disarmament and demobilization impossible in several instances such as Angola, Liberia and Somalia. The 1991-92 demobilization in Angola failed completely largely because both the government and UNITA were unwilling to cooperate and were maintaining secret armies in violation of the *Bicesse Accords*.

Demobilization also requires a clear and credible central authority and implementing agency. If it is the government, it should be able to guide and secure the process with sufficient oversight; and its police force should be in the position to intervene if the security of the ex-combatants or others is threatened. In cases where the demobilization is the result of a peace agreement between two or more parties, this role may be played by an independent outside entity. For example, in El Salvador, Mozambique and Namibia, the UN was the neutral facilitator in sorting out details during the process, and it stepped in and mediated when the peace process showed delays or was at risk.

For demobilization to contribute to peace and development, it needs to be embedded in a broader process of peace-building and national reconciliation. Bridges need to be build between groups and individuals from formerly conflicting sides. In a safe and supportive environment these people could interact and cooperate. Various policies and programs at different levels, including NGO activities, may contribute to such a process. Ultimately, the fundamental causes of the conflict and potential future conflicts have to be dealt with.

2) Planning for demobilization and reintegration support should start early.

In cases where demobilization is the result of a peace agreement, it is most effective if it explicitly provides the framework for the exercise. It would deal with the specifics of the disarmament process, the political and social reforms and the conditions and management of demobilization and reintegration support. The Rome Peace Accord created such a framework in

Mozambique, including an agreement on the role of the UN Operations in Mozambique (UNOMOZ). This made it possible to overcome sensitive disputes between the formerly warring parties (United Nations, 1995a).

Clearly, there is a tension between the political uncertainty that usually exists in a country emerging from a war and the need for advance planning. Nevertheless, important preparatory work includes the mobilization of resources, needs assessment, sensitization of stakeholders, and linking demobilization with reintegration efforts. Programs for resettlement and reintegration should start soon after the end of the war, since armies might begin to disintegrate before formal demobilization—combatants taking their weapons with them. Similarly, if the encampment takes too long and the demobilized have to do without information and opportunities to see their relatives, violent activities and rebellion could undermine the demobilization, as well as the total peace process. Clarity about resettlement and reintegration programs will provide confidence to the ex-combatants and their leaders in the peace agreement and their future in society. In Namibia, no structured reintegration efforts were planned prior to the demobilization. It was assumed that with the excitement of independence, reintegration would simply happen. Subsequently, planning and programming started in reaction to the destabilization threat from some ex-combatants (Preston, 1994).

3) Sufficient provision of basic needs in the encampment stage is critical.

Disarmament and demobilization are complex and sensitive logistical exercises. They require effective management and substantial resources for accommodation, registration, transport and the provision of basic needs. If the provision of basic needs, such as water, sanitation, shelter and food, is insufficient at the encampment and discharge stage, frustration is likely to occur. In Angola in late 1991, for example, living conditions and provision of basic needs in some of the camps were extremely poor. This contributed to widespread desertion. At that point, only emergency assistance by some UN agencies was able to provide some improvement. As with the previous lesson, quick visibility of the benefits of peace is required.

4) Careful disarmament of the combatants is essential.

A number of general methods to cope with ‘surplus weapons’ after wars have been suggested (Laurance and Wulf, 1995): 1) suppliers buy the weapons back; 2) civilian usage; 3) scrapping; 4) mothballing; 5) letting them decay; or 6) export to other countries. Buying the weapons back appears to be the most attractive option. The willingness on the part of the ex-suppliers is however limited. Using the weapons for policing purposes is also an attractive option, but not relevant for all types of weapons. Scrapping and mothballing are possible, but require the type of resources that are usually not available in post-war situations. To reduce the environmental and security costs of surplus weapons in the countries concerned, external financing and expertise could thus facilitate scrapping or converting these weapons.

Several methods to control light weapons have been or are being tried. The police forces in Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa are currently cooperating to reduce the flow of small weapons from Mozambique to South Africa. Special South African policemen are cooperating with the Mozambican Police to seek and destroy illegal weapons inside Mozambique. Caches that are found are often destroyed on the spot. Importation and trade of arms and ammunition can be restricted. The question remains of course how effective the police forces are to implement such a measure. Another possible method to reduce the number of weapons among the civil population in post-war areas is to establish a 'gun buy-back program'. These encourage citizens to voluntarily turn in weapons—with no questions asked—by providing them monetary or in-kind incentives. In the countries in which these schemes have been tried, it has been learned that they can only operate for a limited period, in order not to generate a trade of arms into the country. And the price given should be higher than the black market price (Laurance, 1996). It has also been suggested to focus control not on the arms themselves, but on the ammunition. This has to be replaced all the time and since very little is produced in the countries concerned, control is likely to be easier.

5) A large range of possible instruments exists to facilitate the reintegration.

As argued above, there are several reasons to support the reintegration of ex-combatants. This support might be costly, but long-term costs for society could be even larger if the ex-combatants would not be able to find their livelihoods outside the armed forces. It could lead to increasing unemployment and social deprivation, which could again lead to increasing crime rates and political instability. Governments should, therefore, create a general environment that facilitates reintegration and provide specific services in a responsive and flexible way. A general environment of economic growth is probably the most important factor for successful economic reintegration. The experience shows that governments and NGOs are indeed using various instruments to directly support the ex-combatants and facilitate reintegration (see box I).

Box I: Possible components of resettlement/reintegration support programs

- cash payments
- foodstuffs
- civilian clothing
- household utensils
- building material
- provision of tools
- seeds or agricultural implements
- counseling
- legal and/or business advice
- job placement
- general referral services
- land distribution
- housing support
- public works and other (temporary) public sector job creation
- wage subsidies
- credit schemes
- managerial and technical training

6) Support programs to be designed on the basis of the needs and aspirations of the ex-combatants and their communities.

In order to be responsive to the real needs, the reintegration assistance programs could best be designed and amended in a continuing dialogue with ex-combatants, their families and communities. The adjustment process is also facilitated if the process is as demilitarized as possible. Some general lessons have been learned and a large set of possible components of support packages has been developed, as we saw under lesson 5 above. However, there is no blueprint. The appropriateness of the support depends case by case. An involvement over time is necessary, since the ex-combatants themselves are also going through a learning and adjustment process after leaving the forces. For example, they have to find out themselves what is possible—whether the sometimes over-ambitious plans that they had while still in the army make sense after they arrive back in the village. The need for this joint learning implies also that the actual implementation of the programs should be as decentralized as possible. Obviously, good communication with the ‘center’ should ensure that general lessons are being learned.

7) Reintegration support to benefit the entire community.

Above, I indicated the dilemma of targeted support to ex-combatants and the need to balance between supporting them and the other war-affected groups. From a short-term point of view, one may be inclined to please the ex-combatants to forestall a return to arms. From a long-term perspective, ex-combatants should as soon as possible be treated just like everyone else. A consensus appears to be developing that special efforts for ex-combatants are necessary during the demobilization and resettlement, but that support in the reintegration phase should be as much as possible community-based and part of general post-war rehabilitation efforts.

8) Special consideration and support for certain groups of ex-combatants.

Reintegration programs have thus far generally taken too little consideration of female ex-combatants, their children and the wives of ex-combatants. In the FMLN forces in El Salvador as well as in the EPLF in Eritrea about one-third of the fighters were women. These female ex-fighters as well as other women in war affected communities have usually acquired new roles during wars, and are often expected by men to return to their traditional roles. Thus, reintegration creates tensions. A high divorce rate has for example been observed between ex-fighters in Eritrea (Klingebl *et al.*, 1995). In Uganda, wives from returning soldiers, who came from other regions, were very often not accepted by his family and the community.

Special additional support is also needed for former child soldiers. Many of them have become adults in the meantime, but still require extra care and assistance. They should first of all not undergo assembly (Ball, 1997). An adequate structure is needed to assist child soldiers in beginning new lives. Their experiences have a profound impact on their social and emotional development. They lack parental care and access to school, and their environment inhibits the development of social values. Many are seriously traumatized by the brutal experiences they have undergone and the violent acts committed. Special protection and rehabilitation programs are therefore necessary, especially for girl soldiers whose existence is often denied and who face multiple problems after demobilization. Relocation to areas of origin is often more difficult for young ex-combatants. Assistance in family tracing, special care for the orphaned and physical and psychological rehabilitation may facilitate reintegration. The success of reintegration will also depend on opportunities to gain access to education, training and employment.

Also health care and special assistance to the disabled are important components of effective reintegration programs. A large proportion of the demobilized combatants in Central America and Africa had a disability, one way or another. Incidence of HIV/AIDS has also shown to be high among the demobilized in several countries.

9) International development agencies should be able to provide flexible support.

In several of the countries implementing demobilization and reintegration programs, economic conditions are such that the activities cannot be funded solely by national resources. Several of the agencies involved in development cooperation have over the past few years largely overcome their initial reluctance to get involved in development activities that closely relate to the military and other parts of the security sector. Multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental development agencies provide support in many cases of demobilization for the financing of UN operations, demobilization packages, special services during demobilization, technical assistance, and programs to facilitate reintegration.⁵

Findings with regard to demobilization and reintegration processes that specifically concern the international development agencies are that they should be well prepared to deal with (unexpected) requests for support and need to be involved in the planning processes early on. Demobilization support also requires a large degree of flexibility and willingness to coordinate at all levels on the side of the donors, even more so than in with more traditional development cooperation. Slow procedures and specific rules and regulations have affected the effectiveness of the support. It should be noted that in the process of program design and negotiations in post-war situations, the national officers dealing with the donors are often not very familiar with their policies and procedures. The continuing dialogue with the target groups (see lesson 6) also requires responsiveness on the side of the external agencies.

Final Observations

This paper concludes that on the one hand demobilization does not automatically have a positive impact. It should be undertaken as an integral component of a broad conflict resolution and development strategy. Even then, the benefits don't come easy. Demobilization and efforts to support reintegration are complex and costly, and there are several risks that could derail the whole process. On the other hand, however, if demobilization is managed well and general lessons from the past are drawn, it is likely to make an important contribution to sustainable peace and human development.

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Endnotes

- This paper draws on an earlier review by the author of demobilization and reintegration experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kingma, 1996).
- The term *combatants* is used to reflect that the demobilized could be former government soldiers as well as former members of armed opposition groups.
- Special treatment of ex-combatants may also affect the morale of soldiers remaining in the army. Protests and even mutinies in the new Mozambican army (FADM) were partially caused by high payments to the demobilized (*Africa Confidential*, 14 April 1995).
- 4. A recent BICC study drew lessons for demobilization from public sector retrenchment programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kiggundu, 1997).
- 5. Some institutions involved have already reviewed initial activities in support of demobilization and reintegration (for example Colletta *et al*, 1996a and 1996b; Clark, 1996; Spencer, 1995).