COMMUNITY-FOCUSED REINTEGRATION

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS

BLTP	Burundi Leadership Training Program
CFR	Community-Focused Reintegration
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy
CNDRR	National Commission in charge of the Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration of ex-combatants
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program
MONUC	U.N. Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
ONUB	U.N. Mission in Burundi
PADCO	Planning and Development Collaborative International, Inc.
UNDP	U.N. Development Program
UNHCR	U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIL	U.N. Mission in Liberia
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VST	Vocational Skills Training
WWICS	Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The problem of reintegrating former combatants into community life is a standard feature of post-conflict settings. In 2004, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched Community Focused Reintegration (CFR)[1] programs in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia. These initiatives aimed not only to reintegrate former combatants. They also sought to address a range of community needs, including, among others, the need for stronger local conflict resolution mechanisms, skills for generating non-farm income, and small-scale infrastructure improvements.

Traditional reintegration programming has emphasized providing ex-combatants with life skills and livelihood training. The CFR approach acknowledged the greater breadth of vulnerable, war-affected population segments in need of such training, while seeking to promote reintegration by creating a safe environment in which elements of divided communities could interact. These programs were built on lessons-learned from USAID's earlier youth reintegration program in Sierra Leone. In order to capitalize on the learning opportunity presented by three programs running simultaneously in different contexts, we undertook a study of the three programs, using a desk study, field visits, and broad consultations.

As these programs commenced in early 2004 and the study was undertaken in the first half of 2005, it is too early to document the medium- or long-term impact of the projects. Instead this study seeks to provide a concise summary of the evolution of the program design, lessons learned, and best practices to serve as operational and design guidance for future programs. The introduction lays out the genesis of USAID's CFR programs and the essential design elements, as well as providing short descriptions of the three current country programs. This is followed by an examination of programmatic and operational issues across the three programs. The conclusion provides a summary assessment of the benefits and trade-offs associated with the CFR approach.

CFR is a programming approach which aims to provide training on a range of subjects for which there is demand within communities to provide practical skills to both former combatants and community members while facilitating the reintegration of combatants. These training programs are typically followed in communities by small grants for community projects which apply skills learned in training and foster cooperation across a range of community members. Within

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[1] These programs have also been referred to as Community-based Capacity Building Programs, and developing appropriate terminology for these interventions remains part of the ongoing discussions about the programs and their impact. The activities studied in this report are just one genre of CFR activities. CFR could also, for example, encompass participatory infrastructure construction or community-based micro-enterprises.

this broad programmatic framework, there are significant programmatic and operational differences across the Burundi, DRC, and Liberia programs.

The benefits of a community-based approach to reintegration programming are three-fold. First, it acknowledges that community life *broadly* is affected by conflict, leaving a range of population segments requiring assistance. Second, community-based programming can build communal trust. Third, such programming can contribute to the economic and social rebuilding of communities. As such, this approach may be appropriately considered as a possible intervention in other post-conflict contexts.

INTRODUCTION

One of USAID's missions is to help local partners advance peace and democracy in priority, conflict-prone countries. We provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at mitigating conflict and promoting political stability. We use an in-kind grant mechanism to provide direct assistance to local partners. USAID programs have included media, conflict resolution, reconciliation, technical assistance to government institutions, transitional justice, human rights, civil society development, decentralization, transparency and good governance, civic education, elections, and reintegration of ex-combatants. Our choice of interventions depends on an assessment of what is needed to keep a transition process moving forward, including likely sources of conflict. USAID's speed and flexibility, built on the in-kind grant mechanism, allows it to quickly respond to political shifts.

USAID has supported reintegration efforts in 11 countries.[2] In each of these cases, we determined that helping ex-combatants reintegrate into their communities was critical to establishing stability. In some of these interventions, we focused on ex-combatants, in others on communities as a whole. Activities have included constructing infrastructure for quartering, temporary employment, training, trauma counseling, family reunification for child soldiers, and income-generation. This study deals with the three most recent efforts, in Burundi, the DRC and Liberia, which were built on earlier experience in Sierra Leone.

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED REINTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOBILIZATION, DISARMAMENT, AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS

Immediately following conflict, countries must establish security and stability. While creating conditions for security involves a host of institutional and policy reforms, a critical first step is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups. DDR is a process through which a state aims to rapidly reduce the number of people under arms. Generally funded by external agencies, DDR processes typically involve transport to place of origin, cash payments for a transitional period in some cases, and training or the provision of goods aimed at providing the basis for a future livelihood – vocational training, seeds and tools, access to micro-credit, or small income-generation projects. In some cases former combatants from all factions are integrated into the national security forces, and then demobilized. The degree to which a country is

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[2] These countries are Haiti (1994-1997; 2004-present); Angola (1994-2000); East Timor (1999-2001); Guatemala (1997-1998); Liberia (1996-1998; 2004-present); Philippines (1997-2000); Kosovo (1999-2000); Sierra Leone (2000-2002); Colombia (2001); Democratic Republic of Congo (2004-present); and Burundi (2002-present).

successful in this effort directly affects its ability to foster political stability and social and economic recovery.

While effective in rapidly addressing the security challenges posed by large numbers of idle but armed combatants, DDR programs typically have a number of limitations. In its design, CFR has sought to address some of these limitations. By nature, DDR is often approached solely from a short-term security perspective, focusing on containing violence. Such an approach, however, does not help a country establish a viable security framework and long-term political stability, which create conditions for social and economic recovery. While not attempting to address the institutional or policy frameworks, CFR seeks to work at the community levels to create conditions for lasting stability.

Reintegration is complex. As combatants return, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) also return. At the same time, those who remained in communities often suffered enormously during the conflict, sometimes at the hands of the same reintegrating ex-combatants. Communities therefore have few resources available to help returning population groups. Discussions of programs to benefit former combatants typically refer to "return to civilian life," however in most conflict contexts social and economic fabric itself has been very badly affected. Ex-combatants therefore do not have a "normal" community life to return to, and frequently combatants, particularly youth, had no established livelihood prior to entering the conflict. CFR recognizes that many segments of communities require assistance and that positive change in community conditions and interactions will facilitate reintegration.

There has been much criticism of the reintegration programs that only target ex-combatants. Those excluded from these programs wonder why only those who have been party to violence benefit, and whether, if given the opportunity in the future, they too should join an armed group in order to later be eligible for such benefits.[3] To not only give ex-combatants skills that will help them integrate into civilian life, but also to create an atmosphere in which their integration will be welcome, efforts must include all population segments represented in a community while fostering reconciliation between them.

Furthermore, in designing CFR programs, we recognized that reintegration efforts can only be effective if parties to a conflict are committed to ending violence and building peace. National governments and other parties to a conflict decide whether or not violent conflict will end although external interveners can offer carrots and sticks that may influence that decision. CFR recognizes that sustaining political will at the local level requires creating alternative means for resolving conflict and re-weaving the social fabric.

In many countries, ex-combatants, returning refugees and IDPs, and others need to learn the skills required for both creating a livelihood and contributing to community life, which may not have been acquired due to the conflict. Training

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[3] Field teams emphasize that only targeting ex-combatants could be interpreted as an invitation to take up arms so as to benefit from the downstream benefits of reintegration, especially since in poor countries, these benefits are not negligible.

programs which teach new skills that participants find immediately relevant can help mitigate conflict in the short term by offering participants a constructive alternatives. They can also contribute to long-term peace and development by strengthening participants' abilities to participate in the political, social, and economic life of their societies.

To address ex-combatants' economic concerns, reintegration programs have traditionally offered three routes: temporary employment in public works projects; vocational skills training; and on-the-job training or apprenticeships. The first is a temporary solution, with no provision for sustainability, except through skills and capital acquired during employment. Vocational skills training programs are popular, but do not necessarily translate into livelihoods in the absence of an expanding economy and/or express linkages to income-generation opportunities. Additionally, vocational training may actually raise expectations which cannot be met, exacerbating rather than mitigating potential for conflict. If vocational skills training is carefully planned, it can provide ex-combatants with skills that lead to livelihoods, much like on-the-job training or apprenticeships.

But income-generating and capacity-building activities for ex-combatants alone will not promote their integration into civilian life. While it might give them the requisite skills, knowledge and connections, it will not help them gain acceptance in the communities in which they choose to live. In fact, their exclusive access to training programs and apprenticeships might increase the resentment that other community members feel toward those who have disrupted, if not destroyed, their lives during the violent conflict. Therefore, targeting communities as a whole may lead to more durable reintegration of former combatants.

EVOLUTION OF CFR PROGRAMS

USAID's community-focused youth reintegration program in Sierra Leone, which ran from 2000 to 2002, served as a model for the Burundi, DRC, and Liberia programs. The Sierra Leone program responded to the peace accord between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front. To help ensure the success of the peace accord, the parties urgently needed to re-establish security in the country, which entailed the reintegration of child soldiers into civilian life.

USAID's program targeted both ex-combatants and other at-risk youth. The program started its work at the community level. It eventually benefited more than 45,000 participants in 2,000 training sites. The program worked by establishing community structures to select and guide youth participants, who then were involved in either training or projects for a year to six months. The training curriculum covered literacy, numeracy, life-skills, agriculture, and peace

education, while also including psychosocial and vocational counseling.[4] It employed local instructors using a training-of-trainers model. In many cases, we were the first agency to establish programs in a given community. The Sierra Leone program was the first CFR program, and was evaluated as broadly successful. The program's shortcomings included challenges in sustaining the program and providing follow-up.

Based on the model developed in Sierra Leone, the Burundi, DRC, and Liberia programs have a number of common core elements. These include training courses for mixed groups of ex-combatants and other community members. The courses cover such topics as conflict resolution, reconciliation, democracy, good governance, the environment, health, and literacy and numeracy. In each case, a group of "master trainers" receives training which is then passed on to community-level "learning facilitators" (sometimes called "local facilitators") who duplicate the training at the community level. The cycles of training are then generally followed by support for a community project, carried out by those who received the training as well as other community members. These core elements are combined with other program components, such as grants for information and media projects, civic education, elections, and other projects. Each of the individual country programs has important variations, but the core principle involves promotion of reintegration by bringing together ex-combatants and community members for training and the implementation of small-scale projects. The individual country programs are presented below.

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[4] Art Hansen, Julie Nenon, Joy Wolf and Marc Sommers, *Final Evaluation of the Office of Transition Initiatives' Program in Sierra Leone,* eds. Marc Sommers and Cynthia Prather, Washington, DC: Creative Associates International, Inc., Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, 2002.

CFR PROGRAMS IN BURUNDI, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, AND LIBERIA

BURUNDI

In August 2000, 17 Hutu and Tutsi political parties signed the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, bringing an end to more than seven years of civil war. Subsequently there has been sustained, if gradual, progress toward peace and stability. The successful shift in May 2003 of power from a Tutsi to Hutu transitional president was an important milestone. In November 2003, the last major rebel group, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), joined the transitional government. One small group continues to fight. Most areas, however, are free of fighting, and refugees and IDPs have returned home in large numbers. By September 2005, a series of national and local elections had been completed, culminating in the swearing-in of former CNDD-FDD leader Pierre Nkurunziza as the new president.

In December 2004, the transitional government, with assistance from the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank to support DDR programs throughout the greater Africa Great Lakes region, launched a much-delayed official DDR program. The goal of the DDR program was to demobilize approximately 55,000 ex-combatants over four years and create a unified army of around 25,000, starting with child soldiers, handicapped persons, and ex-combatants near retirement age. Although somewhat hampered by disputes over rank harmonization, the demobilization process has continued.

USAID launched a CFR program in early 2004 aimed at promoting community-based reintegration and reconciliation not only for returning ex-combatants, but also for non-combatant IDPs and refugees. The decision to change the program's direction was in part informed by discussions with the World Bank, which had sought USAID's involvement in the DDR process.

In choosing the new program direction, we concluded that it no longer needed to focus on the national transitional government, which had already achieved a reasonable level of stability. Similarly, we decided not to focus its efforts exclusively on the upcoming elections because other donors were already doing so. USAID also decided not to pursue a stand-alone small grants program. In our office's assessment, its previous small grants program had not been sufficiently successful in fostering reconciliation or giving rural communities faith in the national-level peace process. Instead, we opted for a CFR program, complemented by small grants and media activities.

An important feature of the Burundi program is that our office has sought to carry out an intensive program in two provinces, rather than trying to respond to opportunities in all geographic areas as they emerged. We work in Gitega, in the central region of the country, and in Ruyigi, in the east, based on an assessment of needs and accessibility.[5] Gitega is the second largest town after the capital. As a corridor for rebel groups during the war, it experienced much destruction and instability. As of 2004, it had the second largest number of IDPs[6] in the country, along with one of three cantonment sites for ex-combatants. Ruyigi, historically neglected, had also suffered considerably during the war, and had the largest number of refugee returns of any province by April 2005, increasing the population by 20 percent.[7]

The Burundi CFR program was composed of a community-based leadership training program, a vocational skills training (VST) program, and small community grants. The leadership training program was conceived of as a community-level iteration of the already successful Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), designed and carried out by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS). At the national level, BLTP focused on providing senior authorities and opinion leaders an opportunity to learn communication, conflict mitigation and collaborative decision-making skills. These skills have also been the focus of the community-level version of the program, though adapted to the realities of rural, largely illiterate Burundians. The program consists of a month-long course that includes training on understanding perceptions, communicating effectively, and resolving conflicts. While designed and overseen by WWICS, the training is carried out by 20 master trainers affiliated with a Burundian NGO, African Strategic Initiatives. The program is unusual in that one master trainer lives in each of the 18 communes of Gitega and Ruyigi Provinces. The other two master trainers work in the eight VST schools. One graduate of the leadership training per commune serves as a local facilitator to support master trainers. The training curriculum for both the leadership training and the VST assumes an illiterate audience. As of September 2005, approximately 6,200

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[5] Accessibility was a high priority because of USAID's inability to monitor its first program's small grants, given the country's insecurity and U.S. government personnel movement restrictions.
[6] OCHA Burundi, *Internally Displaced Populations and Displacement Sites in Burundi, March-April 2004, Preliminary Results*, Burundi: OCHA, April 2004.
[7] UNHCR, *Summary of Burundian Returnees (Facilitated and Spontaneous)*, Burundi: UNHCR, April 17, 2005.

people had received training in the two provinces. The component involving community-based leadership training will close out at by the end of 2005.

The VST component, implemented by PADCO, emerged out of discussions with ex-combatants in assembly areas who, after agricultural inputs and land, identified job skills and access to micro-credit as their greatest need. Staffed by 238 teachers, the eight VST schools also offer courses in brick and tile making, carpentry, masonry, furniture making, tailoring, and bread making. They also provide students leadership training, small-business management, numeracy and literacy skills, and civic education, including human rights, democracy, and elections. Like the leadership training component, the VST curriculum does not assume that students are literate.

The VST program consists of four five- to six-month sessions per school, and anticipates that it will graduate close to 4,000 participants by mid-2006. Approximately one-fourth of students are women. Fifty-five percent are from vulnerable groups who remained in their communities during the conflict, while the rest are equally divided among ex-combatants from different armed groups, returned refugees, and IDPs. Graduates from the first two sessions have formed 208 non-farm income-generating associations.

The VST curriculum was designed with input and final approval from the Ministry of Handicrafts.[8] USAID and its principal implementing partner for this program, PADCO, have also maintained a dialogue with MDRP, the U.N. Mission in Burundi, and the national agency overseeing demobilization in order to encourage coherence between the VST program and plans for demobilized combatants.

The small grants component of the program aims to foster cooperation among divided populations on the community level on small community infrastructure projects. Some 220 small grants, totaling more than $4 million, have been implemented in communities in the two provinces. The projects range from capacity-building grants for local-level conflict resolution to small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation (for schools, community centers, and water systems) to help ease the impact of large numbers of returnees.

The Burundi program targets ex-combatants, ex-civilian militia, returned refugees, IDPs and vulnerable groups that remained in their communities during the conflict, such as female and child heads of household, and orphans. The leadership training program targets people that community members consider leaders. The majority of VST participants range in age from 16 to 29 years, and it is the only program component that incorporates a large number of youth.

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[8] USAID collaborated with the Ministry of Handicrafts in establishing the schools and developing the curriculum. Graduates are certified by the government in their skill areas, giving them added credibility. USAID has also developed an MOU with Burundi's national micro-credit program COOPEC granting graduates access to micro-credit, and it is adding credit management to its Vocational Skills Training curriculum.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

In December 2002, after seven years of war, marked by large-scale foreign intervention, and after a number of failed peace attempts, the parties to the conflict in the DRC signed a peace agreement in Pretoria, South Africa. Particularly affecting the eastern provinces, the war left an estimated 2.5 million dead, three million displaced, and 300,000 refugees in neighboring countries. The war was characterized by a very high incidence of human rights abuses, particularly rape and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as the abduction of children to serve as combatants or concubines. The Pretoria agreement called for the withdrawal of foreign forces, the establishment of a transitional government incorporating all of the rival factions, the integration of all military forces and DDR for around 150,000 to 200,000 armed combatants not selected for engagement in the unified armed forces. The UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC) has been in operation since 1999. Over time, their mandate has expanded from observing a six-country cease-fire to ensuring the cease-fire, promoting DDR in eastern Congo, enforcing an arms embargo, and improving security.

Within eight months after the signing of the agreement, a large number of foreign troops were withdrawn, the transitional government had been set up, and a single military command structure had been established. However, there have been long delays in initiating DDR, which was to primarily be funded through the MDRP. The delays are due to disputes over the size of the new army and distribution of leadership roles, as well as logistical challenges. Although security in the majority of the country has improved significantly, certain areas in eastern DRC remain plagued with fighting, human rights abuses, and banditry by combatants. A recent census now shows an estimated 150,000 combatants still operating in DRC. Despite delays, the DDR process began to gain momentum with the opening of assembly centers and the creation of seven mixed brigades for the national army in 2004 and 2005.

There has been progress in the political transition. As of the date of this publication, the Independent Election Commission had registered over 17 million voters. A referendum on the new constitution, completed in May 2005, is scheduled for December 2005. A first round of elections is scheduled for March 2006, to be followed by presidential elections in April 2006. The initiation of voter registration in June 2005 significantly improved popular confidence in the transition process.

After starting it s program in 2002, USAID re-tooled it in 2004 and launched a CFR program in the highly conflict prone areas of eastern DRC. In re-assessing its program, our office identified reintegration as a critical issue, especially since it was already quite clear that the formal DDR process would miss a large number of people involved in combat, but lacking formal military identification, such as local militia, child soldiers, and women. The program aimed to create support for the peace process by helping the war-torn communities in the east and improving the security environment by providing ex-combatants with social and

technical skills. These community level interventions are complemented by media programs at the local, regional, and national level.

Implemented by Chemonics International, the DRC program has offices in the capital, Kinshasa, and three field offices: two in Orientale Province (in Bunia in the Ituri District and in the provincial capital, Kisangani) and one in Maniema Province (in Kindu). It also has seven sub-offices, located as far as 300 kilometers from field offices.[9] Given the enormous size of the DRC, the program spans a larger geographic area than Burundi and Liberia but operates with the same amount of funding.

The core component of the program is a community-based training activity, covering five modules: (1) health and well-being; (2) reaffirmation of values (including gender and rape sensitization and psychosocial assistance for war trauma); (3) conflict management and leadership; (4) agricultural skills, income generation and project management; and (5) democracy and governance. The complete course lasts for six months. Like the other CFR programs, it relies on master trainers, who visit and sensitize target communities, help organize Community Management Committees, and train and supervise their community counterparts – the learning facilitators. The master trainers also assist in identifying and implementing community projects funded by small grants.

There are 14 master trainers who work in teams. Each team covers 20 communities per six-month cycle with 60 participants in each community. The first cycle ended in March 2005, and the second started in May 2005. A third cycle only in Ituri will run from December 2005 until April 2006. Community Management Committees are comprised of six members: two adult women, two adult men and two youth. Of these six committee members, one is often a local government official and two more are learning facilitators.

The program aims to have 80-percent youth participation, with youth defined as people between 18 and 35 years of age. Although the program aims for 50-percent participation of women among the youth, actual ratios generally favor males, depending in part on the local traditional roles of women. The youth target group combines ex-combatants and others considered at-risk, including rape victims. The remaining 20 percent of participants are interested adults in the community.

Participants are selected by community members. In contrast to Burundi and Liberia, most participants are literate, due in part to the relatively higher literacy rates in the DRC[10]. Further, the selection of literate participants reflects the community view that those who are literate can more easily re-teach the modules to other community members.

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[9] Two sub-offices are in Maniema (Punia and Kalima, managed by the Kindu office). The other five are in Orientale, with three managed by the Kisangani office (Bafwasende, Isiro, and Buta) and two managed by the Bunia office (Aru and Mahagi).
[10] According to UNICEF, the DRC has an adult literacy rate of 61%, compared to 54% in Liberia and 48% in Burundi.

There are 60 participants in each community and 8,400 targeted participants per cycle, or 16,800, total. The reach of the program is wide, and master trainers spend much of their time living in communities, as far as 160 kilometers from the field offices.

Like in Burundi, the DRC program also has a small-grants component. The Community Management Committees, together with master trainers, identify and organize the projects. The projects are intended to benefit the whole community and foster reconciliation among different elements. The program has funded a total of 130 projects, totaling approximately $2.7 million. Projects have varied greatly in size and scope.

USAID's program in the DRC is scheduled to end in March 2006. However the CFR program will continue through May 2006 on its own with funding from the MDRP through CONADER, the national body charged with overseeing the demobilization and reintegration process. Additionally, in the DRC, a network of learning facilitators, community committees, radio listening clubs, and regional community centers is being formalized. USAID's Democracy and Governance office has committed funding to continue this network.

LIBERIA

In August 2003, Liberia's civil war ended with a framework for the establishment of a National Transitional Government and a DDR plan. An era of "turbulent peace" began following the exile of President Charles Taylor on August 11, 2003. Significantly under-funded, the DDR process has not proceeded smoothly. Approximately one weapon was collected for every three combatants who entered the process.[11] Insufficient funding for ex-combatant reintegration has created instability. Grievances among former combatants contributed to riots in Monrovia in October 2004 which left 16 people dead. It is estimated that at least half of all ex-combatants remain in the capital city.

USAID's CFR program in Liberia, known as YES (Youth Education for Life Skills), has aimed to help refugees, IDPs, and ex-combatants reintegrate into their communities and civilian life to advance an inclusive, peaceful, political transition in Liberia. The program focuses particularly on youth, given that those under 30 years of age are more than 50 percent of the population. Youth was also the logical demographic group to target given their high numbers of recruitment over the course of the 14-year war, during which many youth lost access to education, training, and employment. In excess of 100,000 people went through the official DDR process, and it is estimated that 15,000 child soldiers were engaged in the conflict.

The Liberia program has operated in two distinct phases, start-up and roll-out, and it has involved several implementing partners. In start-up, USAID worked with

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[11] International Crisis Group, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, Africa Report No. 87, Dakar and Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2004, 10.

the international contractor, Creative Associates International, Inc., which awarded grants to two international NGOs, Mercy Corps and ActionAid. The NGOs worked in separate counties for the program: ActionAid mainly in Grand Cape Mount and Mercy Corps primarily in Grand Bassa. Mercy Corps further worked through three Liberian NGOs. For the roll-out phase, we entered into cooperative agreements with Mercy Corps and a consortium of World Vision, ActionAid and Search for Common Ground. It is anticipated that 12 of the country's 15 counties will be reached by the end of the program.

The program initially started in 37 communities, followed by evaluation and revisions. Originally, a training component was to last five months, with 35 youth participants meeting approximately 14 hours per week in each community. The program, however, was simplified by reducing the training period to three months, for six hours a week. The curriculum contains seven modules – identity, world of work, health and us, peaceful living, good governance, our environment and next steps. Literacy and numeracy are incorporated into each module.

Like the other programs, Liberia follows a training-of-trainers model. Seventy-five master trainers supervise 906 learning facilitators. The two learning facilitators in each community lead the training sessions. Additionally in each community, a Community-based Management Committee supervises the program. There are also youth teams working with the master trainers, serving as mentors to participants and helping youth link into their communities. The program's target is to reach 30,000 war-affected youth in 633 communities by program close in February 2007.

Finally, the Liberia program also includes a small-grants component, to facilitate youth leadership in identifying and implementing community projects. Averaging around $5,000, these projects are generally smaller than those in the other programs. Projects to date have included school renovations and other infrastructure improvements to facilitate reintegration, the purchase of communal cassava mills to enhance livelihoods, and small-scale training in animal husbandry. As a result of its first cycle of training, there have been close to 200 projects, totaling some $1 million as of October 2005.

In addition to its principal YES program for war-affected populations in rural areas, we devised a response to the October 2004 riots by adapting the program to better serve at-risk youth in Monrovia, specifically those residing in communities where violence was most intense. To serve this population, the "urban YES" curriculum was shortened to an intensive six-week course on conflict transformation, self-awareness, human rights, leadership, HIV/AIDS, and drug education. The shortened program takes into account that urban youth populations have busier lives with more competition for their time. Urban youth, moreover, are unlikely to attend a five-month program in the absence of payment for an extended period. This urban program is being implemented with

the involvement of seven other NGOs.[12] It quickly expanded from seven communities in Monrovia to 65 communities in five cities[13], involving a total of 6,720 youth.

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[12] Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Organization of Muslim Liberian Youth, Development Education Network-Liberia, Graceland Incorporated, Buchanan Child Community-based Care and the Agricultural Relief Service.
[13] The cities are Kakata, Gbarnga, Ganta, Buchanan and Tubmanburg.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Initial research for this report was first based on a review of available program documents and interviews with relevant USAID and implementing partner staff members in Washington, DC. Based on this preliminary review, the team drafted a desk study. This was vetted within USAID and then shared with representatives of the Department of State, World Bank, U.N. offices, NGOs, and contractors. The research team met with more than fifty of these representatives prior to undertaking the project's field research. We also regularly convened representatives from multiple USAID offices to ensure that the project's findings were useful to outside entities.

Field research in Burundi, DRC, and Liberia was guided by a set of questions and protocols. Separate tools were developed to address four sets of people in each country: (1) our staff and implementing partners engaged in capacity-building reintegration efforts; (2) members of communities where USAID's programs were taking place (including program participants, instructors and community leaders); (3) other donors and implementing partners of other capacity-building reintegration programs; and (4) key officials related to national DDR programming.

Three research constraints emerged. Field research periods took place too early in the program's life to definitively evaluate CFR work. Secondly, researchers had only two weeks in the field. Finally, efforts to evaluate programming against similar programs run by other agencies were curtailed by limited fieldwork time and lack of comparable programs. Consequently, this research extracted findings and analysis aimed at providing operational guidance on whether and how CFR programming can contribute to post-war reintegration, it does not constitute an evaluation of the programs studied.

PROGRAMMATIC GUIDANCE AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Burundi, Liberia, and DRC programs take place in distinct, yet similar contexts. Sustained peace in Liberia and DRC is linked to regional dynamics and state control over natural resources. Burundi's peace process is also linked to the region, but the governments of Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa are strongly engaged in promoting the political transition. All three countries have reached a certain level of stability with the help of U.N. peacekeeping forces, and all are in the midst of elections. All face the challenge of DDR and security sector reform, as well as the return of large numbers of refugees and IDPs. In designing its programs, USAID reached the conclusion that neither a small-grants program nor a conventional DDR program would contribute to lasting reintegration of former combatants and sustained peace. Consequently, we opted for CFR programs. The following section explores different operational aspects of the program, with a view to documenting choices and lessons learned. In the DRC and Burundi, our office opted for a CFR program after reassessments of the utility of stand-alone small-grants programs that we usually run at the community level. Additionally, USAID and others believed that one of the most pressing problems in all three countries was the need to provide skills to ex-combatants and others in order to involve them in the re-building of communal life.

GEOGRAPHY

Geographic targeting requires careful decision-making in designing CFR programs, involving considerations of which areas require greatest conflict mitigation efforts, access, security, and coordination with other donors. Involving hundreds of trainers and other staff, CFR programs are very labor-intensive and logistically complex, and compared to our typical sojourn of about two-to-three years in a given country, CFR programs require a significant time commitment in any one province or region. Once an investment is made in establishing a program in one area, it is challenging to change areas, particularly in a large country like the DRC, cutting down on flexibility to respond to unfolding events in fluid transition contexts. Future program designers must carefully assess the environment to ensure that the areas they target are the most critical.

Additionally, program designers must examine the history of different locations and consider whether a given area has already been a significant aid recipient in order to ensure that the program will not have the unintended impact of inflaming regional jealousies. Each of the programs studied managed to reach areas that did not have histories of benefiting much if at all from external assistance. This was particularly true in the DRC, where the program operates in areas of Ituri that most international agencies consider too insecure or too logistically difficult to reach.

USAID's three programs used different approaches to geographic targeting. The Burundi program provided the greatest "depth," working in only two provinces and seeking to reach a very large percentage of communities throughout all 18 of the communes. Some 8-9 cycles of community-based leadership training have been conducted in each commune, allowing a broad range of formal and informal leaders to be reached and supported. The Liberia program was the most ambitious in geographic terms, seeking initially to cover the whole country. Even in a relatively small country, however, this created challenges in securing partners and funds to roll out such a comprehensive approach, leading to decisions made on partner presence rather than solely on programmatic grounds. It has also meant smaller amounts available for grant-making, given the number of communities covered. The DRC program has perhaps struck the most interesting balance. It has focused on two badly conflict-affected provinces for clear strategic reasons, while taking a flexible, synergistic approach to community selection. The program has also been creative in responding in new areas as the formal DDR process has returned former combatants to communities. For example, in Uvira, in South Kivu Province, we trained a local NGO conducting reintegration in its training curriculum. In another case, USAID deployed learning facilitators to quickly expand the training program in an area with many former militias. Master trainers in Isiro and Mahagi provide training modules on local radio stations.

TARGET POPULATION

Another key programmatic consideration is population targeting, i.e. whom to focus on. USAID's programs in DRC and Liberia explicitly focus on youth. The Burundi leadership program is open to all who have been identified by their community as official or unofficial leaders, while the VST program is intended to serve youth, returned refugees, IDPs, ex-combatants, child soldiers, and women and child heads of households. The small-grants component ideally brings together all elements of the communities.

The Liberia and DRC programs focused on the missed education and socialization of youth as a result of the conflict. However, in designing the leadership program in Burundi, program designers focused on the inability of local practices to resolve conflicts and targeted anyone in a community deemed to be a leader. The VST program was intended to address the lack of

economic opportunities and available land as underlying causes of conflict, targeting those without land and in need of non-farm income-generating skills.

In the DRC, by contrast, we include government officials as training program observers. As a result of this outreach and inclusion, government and judicial officials have begun to change their approaches to reflect the desires and values they have heard community members express. Across all programs, whether local leaders were targeted by the program or not, efforts were made to gain their support. For example, local official and unofficial leaders generally attended training launches or graduations, and played a role in the design and implementation of community projects funded by small grants.

Once targeting decisions are made, engagement of target populations presents another challenge. In Liberia, for example, it proved challenging to engage youth. The alienation of youth who had spent years in the conflict made reaching them unusually difficult. However, this meant that the program initially attracted more female youth than originally anticipated. The program's policy to not pay compensation to participants also made recruitment particularly difficult in Liberia, where some are accustomed to "sitting fees" or other material benefits upon completion. (Similar programs, including other USAID-funded programs, offer participants compensation.) It also affected each program's ability to reach target beneficiary groups. Lack of payment served as a disincentive for the participation of youth, particularly the most alienated and disenfranchised. In urban environments where other donors were funding various initiatives aimed at youth, many were drawn instead to competing quick-impact public employment projects and training programs that compensated participants. The program took this into consideration when it created an urban-focused version of the training with an abbreviated curriculum and additional recreational activities. In more remote areas of eastern DRC, by contrast, the policy of not compensating participants proved easier to implement, with the program retaining 95 percent of its original participants at the end of the first six-month cycle of training.

Another key question revolves around the strategic targeting of potential participants among ex-combatants, i.e., whether former commanders or rank-and-file combatants should be targeted. CFR is inherently more suited to rank-and-file fighters; however, creating political space for these leaders to redirect their energies in a post-war environment is important for shifting the conflict from the battlefield to the political arena. In this respect, Burundi's national leadership program, known as BLTP, was an effective complement to the community-level programs.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

In each case, USAID chose different structures for the implementation of the CFR program, ranging from the simplest structure with one implementer in the DRC to a variety of different international and local implementers in Liberia.

While creating a much more complex management structure, and therefore higher transaction costs, the Liberia and Burundi model had the advantage of drawing on international NGOs and local NGOs that were very familiar with the Liberian and Burundi contexts. Additionally, the inclusion of local NGOs in Liberia and Burundi contributed to building local organizational capacity that will serve as part of program legacy. At the same time, these programs benefited from the international contractors' capacity to get up and running quickly. However, clarifying roles, maintaining a unified approach, and ensuring adequate information sharing among all partners has been a challenge.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND CURRICULUM CHOICES

Designing CFR programs involves critical choices regarding program components and curriculum design. While the curriculum for all three programs was broadly based on the Sierra Leone program, they were all adapted to the individual country's contexts. A key to program success, maintaining participation, and ensuring that skills were used was teaching subjects of immediate relevance. For example, the DRC's high attendance rate was attributed to the relevance of the course material, particularly conflict resolution skills, health (which included the use of locally available medicinal plants), and democracy and governance, with its focus on voter registration and elections.

In Liberia, the original curriculum was too difficult for most participants, learning facilitators, and some master trainers. Further, the literacy programming, which was a central program attraction, was not given enough course hours. The program recognized these challenges while evaluating the start-up phase and then adjusted the curriculum accordingly. In the DRC, modules are taught one at a time to learning facilitators to allow for modifications after feedback.

The timing, location, and length of sessions influenced program effectiveness. The Liberia program held sessions at night, making it possible for participants with daytime responsibilities to attend. It also allowed additional onlookers to benefit from the trainings. Reducing class hours per week increased the program's accessibility. The DRC program allows each community to design its own training schedule, as long as they finish each module within a three-week timeframe. Teaching in the local language, a curriculum that did not depend on literacy, and interactive teaching methods helped participants learn, remember, and use what they learned.

The presence of master trainers in the communities was identified as a critical means for reinforcing on a regular basis the messages received in training. In Burundi, one master trainer has lived in each of the communes, while in the DRC,

master trainers circulate between twenty communities per each team. Even in the shortest programs, the urban program in Liberia, the ongoing presence of master trainers reinforces values and skills gained during the trainings. Additionally, the master trainers support learning facilitators, who are community members and are charged with reinforcing the training after the formal program has ended.

In all three programs, small community-level grants were a key complement to the training component of the program. An important question is how the grant component dovetailed with the training component. In the DRC, formal and informal leaders who had undergone the training were better able to support the reconciliation and reintegration goals of the grants' process. In Burundi, there was generally less of an explicit link between the training component and grant-making. The training program was the focus from the outset, and community grants initially began as a separate program component. They grew linked as the master trainers helped the grant staff identify communities particularly vulnerable to violence and bring together representatives of all population segments for meetings on possible projects. VST participants were called upon to help with construction projects. An important question for further study is how the training affected the impact of the grants, and how the grants reinforced the training lessons.

Burundi's VST program is seen by observers to have been very useful in providing skills for returning combatants and others as the formal DDR process was going on. However, an important question surrounds the value added of the VST versus the opportunity costs of such a capital-intensive program, which could be usefully examined in a future study.

PROGRAM SYNERGIES

In each country, the USAID program included activities other than community reintegration.

All three of the programs wrestled with the need to respond to unanticipated conflict mitigation demands, while investing significant portions of their human and financial resources in ongoing training programs. Use of media to provide citizens with access to timely, balanced and accurate information has been a common program element.

In Burundi, USAID has a media program and a small number of national-level grants. In addition to improving dissemination of information, the media program sought to give a voice to average Burundian citizens on topics such as the peace process and political transition, increasing citizen participation and national affairs. This has been achieved through grants to two radio stations to cover costs of travel around the country to report on important local events and provide local perspectives on national issues.

In DRC, USAID's media activities include support to the UN's Radio Okapi, support to community radio stations, information centers, internet centers, public information materials, and radio listening clubs. We also supported the creation of the communications strategy for the Independent Election Commission and civic education materials surrounding the elections. In Liberia, our office has undertaken media programs aimed at increasing the capacity of local media through the provision of training and equipment to journalists and media outlets. We provided small grants to national organizations for justice, good governance, and human rights projects.

Creating synergies between these program elements and the CFR is an important design choice. In the case of Burundi, the CFR training program and its national-level parent program, the BLTP, have together fostered information exchanges between national-level elections officials, DDR officials, and program staff with their community-level perspectives. The CFR program staff has also worked with national-level government and UN elections officials, deploying master trainers to fragile areas to provide abbreviated trainings in conflict mitigation before elections. After elections, the master trainers have offered conflict-mitigation skills training to newly-elected leaders in highly conflict-prone areas. In Liberia, USAID supported community radio programming which delivers and reinforces training curriculum content. In the DRC, some communities which have participated in the training have been given grants to establish radio listening clubs.

COORDINATION WITH FORMAL DDR, DEMONSTRATION EFFECT, AND HANDOVER/FOLLOW-ON

COORDINATION WITH FORMAL DDR

Ideally, CFR programs would be synchronized with official DDR processes. Strong coordination, however, has proved hard to achieve. Official DDR plans are often centrally funded, designed, and directed. Any number of factors, including security and changes in concentrations of ex-combatants, can affect actual implementation. CFR programs also require time to recruit training staff, set up training centers, and establish offices and logistics. In all three countries, uncertainty surrounding the timing of official DDR processes made it difficult to have CFR programs operating to coincide exactly with the return of ex-combatants from cantonment sites.

In the case of Liberia, problems of coordination were exacerbated by unrealistic estimates of the number of combatants to be disarmed. In December 2003, the UN Mission in Liberia launched the DDR process. By October 2004, it had disarmed between 50,000 and 100,000 combatants. The majority of estimates were far above the 53,000 that UNMIL had originally anticipated. The large variation in estimates pointed to the difficulty of defining who qualified for official demobilization benefits. As a result of underestimating the number of combatants to be demobilized, UNMIL could not fulfill its original promise for the

value of reinsertion packages. In October 2004, ex-combatants rioted in Monrovia, due to unmet expectations regarding reinsertion packages. At that point our office was ready to launch its CFR start-up phase, and fortunately the program had the flexibility to respond to the instability by developing a program targeted at urban youth.

In the DRC, the official DDR process has seen extensive delays. It was launched in Ituri in September 2004; several months after our office started its CFR process. Adjusting to the delays in the official process, we selected sites where there were large numbers of self-demobilized ex-combatants. In mid 2005, DDR picked up speed. Although USAID anticipates ending its DRC program in early 2006, we are setting up structures and funding from the national DDR commission, called CONADER, for the program's continuation.

In Burundi, our training program was designed in part at the request of and in coordination with the UN and World Bank, anticipating the need for reintegration programs following the DDR process. DDR, however, was only launched in December 2004, almost ten months after our CFR program began. Since the DDR launch, there has been improved coordination, with the VST program visiting cantonment sites and encouraging ex-combatants to register upon their return to Gitega and Ruyigi. This has led to an increase in the proportion of ex-combatants participating in the program. However, while the DDR process is anticipated to continue for four years, demobilizing an estimated total of 55,000 combatants, and USAID will have completed its community-based training program by end-2005 and its vocational skills training by mid-2006. our office is seeking other donors to continue its efforts after its departure.

Coordination with other reintegration projects has been equally challenging for all three programs. In Burundi and Liberia, other agencies, including others funded by USAID, are carrying out capacity-building programs in some of the same areas where USAID is working. Field coordination is nonetheless sometimes elusive. The program in DRC faces a different challenge in that it operates in areas where other agencies are not present.

DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

In addition to day-to-day impacts, USAID's CFR programs have a potentially important demonstration effects in showing new methodologies for reintegration. This has been most pronounced in the DRC, where the program has worked closely with CONADER, the national DDR commission funded through a World Bank-managed trust fund. This collaboration has enabled CONADER officials to learn important lessons on reintegration from USAID's experience. CONADER officials initially visited the program in early 2005, and in October 2005, CONADER concluded an agreement to continue funding the program, together with the USAID mission, for ten additional months. Additionally, the program undertakes public opinion surveys every two months in the areas where it works, and it shares the local perspectives it gathers with national government officials to help inform their decision-making. Furthermore, the USAID program in the DRC has

successfully drawn other international actors into remote, underserved areas of eastern DRC.

HANDOVER AND FOLLOW-ON

A central risk of the CFR approach is coping with community expectations for follow-on programming, especially for vocational skills training programs. "And now what?" and "For what?" are questions program participants often voice. Without solid follow-on plans, USAID risks exacerbating tensions through raised expectations. This question may be examined from two angles. First, what happens to those who have gone through vocational skills training programs once program-generated opportunities cease? Second, are other agencies interested in continuing training programs once USAID has ended programs in a given country? While the second is largely a question of good assessments and coordination, the first is a fundamental challenge for most reintegration programs.

In contexts where the economy is not expanding and/or there are few donor-supported public works or reconstruction projects, graduates of training programs may have few opportunities to use their skills. Ideally programs incorporate follow-on opportunities, such as the formation of cooperatives, micro-credit programs, or apprenticeships which can promote livelihoods. This point is exceedingly important. Economic fundamentals must be present for the development of agricultural and/or non-agricultural production and marketing in a given region. That is, there needs to be the availability of land and other inputs, money in circulation, employment opportunities, market accessibility, etc. for this sort of training to lastingly contribute to the peace-building and recovery process. The Burundi program has attempted to provide this kind of follow-on through the creation of 208 associations of graduates of the VST schools. It has also funded a local micro-finance NGO to operate in the VST schools.

USAID linked CFR programs to efforts to promote community-level reconciliation through community projects funded through small grants. This sort of linkage allows participants to immediately use their new skills and responds to participant expectations that they will receive something for their participation. However, this is a short-term fix. Like training, small projects also come to an end in the absence of outside funding from either government or donor sources.

The Liberia program has sought to harness expectations through small grants that facilitate youth engagement and leadership development, as well as community reintegration. In DRC, the positive energy and reintegration results arising from the training programs was somewhat muted as programs wound down in communities. The program provided certain communities small grants, while seeking to engage other development agencies in the communities. However, restrictions surrounding the participation in small grants and the sometimes top-down nature of those grants caused some complaints. Some communities even described how training participants used the conflict

resolution skills they had been taught to deal with conflicts surrounding equity and the management of the small projects.

In some cases, there may be reason to continue the training program itself, although this is also challenging. In Burundi, our office is looking to hand-over both the VST and leadership training components. However, USAID in Burundi has very limited funds relative to the country's needs. Similarly, other donors have often already allocated their funds. As a result, we are spending significant energy during the program's second year looking for ways to hand off VST and its community leadership program, CBLP, to another donor. Had more thought about handover been incorporated into the program design, this challenge might be smaller.

CONCLUSION

Conducted relatively soon into the life of the programs involved, this study is not intended to be an evaluation of the programs. Instead, it is intended to document the design elements of CFR programs and suggest the ways in which such programs can contribute to reintegration, conflict mitigation, and stability in post-conflict settings. While it is too soon to draw conclusions regarding medium to long-term impact, CFR programs in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Liberia have had immediate impacts in their communities, while setting the stage for future programs.

The projects have all contributed tangibly to improvements in community well-being through small-scale infrastructure projects. Additionally, the Burundi program has explicitly sought to provide skills that will lead to more secure livelihoods for ex-combatants and other community members affected by conflict. However, beyond these tangible gains, the chief aim of the programs has been to provide a transformative experience for a broad range of community members who have been divided or at least affected by conflict. The programs have created a setting in which people may hear, think, and talk about topics with which they have not grappled, individually or collectively. The programs have also offered practical skills in of leadership, communication, conflict resolution, and other areas to help people respond in new ways to collective challenges. Across the three programs, the greatest impact consistently reported is changes in community interactions and greater civic activism, whether through cooperation on community projects or interest in national elections.

The Burundi program is unique among the three in that it attempts to address the difficult problem of creating sustainable livelihoods for returning ex-combatants and others. The program confronts the intrinsic challenge of how graduates will use skills in the absence of economic opportunities; the program has attempted

to provide linkages to the labor market through the formation of associations, access to micro-credit, and links to small projects. Assessments of the ultimate success of this approach, with a view to future improvements in these linkages, remain an important area for future work.

An important, if under-exploited, facet of these programs is that they provide a platform for a broad range of future programs by USAID missions and other international agencies. In the DRC, USAID is working to ensure that the networks established through the CFR program will continue to be engaged by other USAID programs. Additionally, the basic health and education training, for example, provided in the CFR courses for community members can form the basis for future interventions in these areas.

Community-Focused Reintegration programs constitute a new approach to reintegration which aims to address the complexities of rebuilding community life in post-conflict settings. It is hoped that the examination of these three programs may form a basis for future programming and study in this area.

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