

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF PEACEBUILDING

PRACTICE NOTE SERIES

‘Peacebuilding essentials for economic development practitioners’

Practice note 4: Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

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Contents

Section 1: Introduction
to series

Section 2: Key issues,
risks and opportunities

Section 3: Major
actors, institutions and
processes

Section 4: Existing good
practice and guidance

Section 5: Where to find
out more

1: Introduction to series

1.1. About this note

This practice note explains what economic development planners and practitioners can do to support the socio-economic reintegration of former combatants. It will assist you in your efforts to mobilise economic actors to play a constructive role in reintegration processes. The socio-economic reintegration of former combatants is important and relevant for economic development planners and practitioners as successful reintegration will increase security and stability; both necessary pre-conditions for economic development, business expansion and the reduction of costs and risks of doing business. Simultaneously, economic recovery and business expansion are essential preconditions for successful socio-economic reintegration, as most ex-combatants will need to find employment in the private sector.

1.2. Who should read this series?

Policy-makers and practitioners, specifically those that are working in conflict-prone and conflict-affected contexts.

1.3. The series will help you to:

- Better understand key economic recovery challenges and opportunities in conflict and post-conflict contexts;
- Draw on existing good practice for your own economic development planning and programming in this area;
- Maximise the positive contribution your strategy and programme can make to economic recovery and peacebuilding; and
- Ensure that your intervention is conflict-sensitive.

2

Section 2:
Key issues, risks
and opportunities

Section 2: Key issues, risks and opportunities

2.1. The key issue

In many post-conflict countries, especially in those with a negotiated peace agreement, a process of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of combatants is put in place, targeted at rebels, militia, paramilitary and other armed groups. While the disarmament and demobilisation parts of the DDR process are relatively straightforward, the socio-economic reintegration of former combatants has proved to be far more complex.

‘Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance’. – *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)*

Reintegration is a long, difficult process, particularly because it involves “helping ex-combatants to move away from the roles and positions that defined them during the conflict to identifying themselves as citizens and members of the local communities.”¹ The other major challenge is their economic reintegration in the often war-torn economy, which is characterised by already high unemployment rates. The ability for an ex-combatant to reintegrate is dependent on many factors, including what motivated (or pressured) them to fight in the first place, what role they played during the conflict and what alternatives are available to them.

Failure to successfully complete this last stage of DDR can seriously endanger the overall peace process: the continued presence of unemployed, formerly armed combatants poses a threat to community- and national-level security, and can thereby jeopardise all other efforts at economic recovery as well as peacebuilding. It is therefore vital for policy-makers and practitioners to ensure that the challenges and risks related to socio-economic reintegration of former combatants in countries emerging from conflict are understood and taken into account during the planning and implementation phases of DDR.

Economic development programming is a key component of such reintegration efforts, given the challenges of creating jobs, salaried or self-employed, for those who are demobilised. Economic reintegration contains two dimensions:

1. **Improving employability:** to increase the employability of combatants through intensive training in skills that are actually in demand in local economies and markets, and through longer-term support to new entrepreneurs, for example through mentoring and business support services.
2. **Strengthening the enabling environment:** to create an enabling economic environment, especially in local communities with high return of ex-combatants, for job creation and private-sector development, including for micro-businesses.

¹ C. Watson (2009). *Socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants: What role for the European Union?* Background paper produced for a roundtable discussion, Brussels, 3rd September 2009.

Finally it is crucial to clearly distinguish between the reintegration *process*, which is an individual and possibly long-term process, and the reintegration *programme*, with a clear time-span (2-4 years), budget and exit strategy.

2.2. Key conflict risks and challenges

'In short, by paying for disarmament and demobilisation while not putting enough energy or resources into reintegration one result is to create a pool of young men with no knowledge or experience of civilian life who have received money but got no job and no home and who may well have kept their most useful weapons which they know perfectly well how to use – a reserve army for criminal employment or mobilisation in the next war'.²

One of the biggest challenges of reintegration programmes is how to successfully reintegrate former combatants into society. This centres around two major issues:

1. How can communities, which often include victims of violent conflict, accept the combatants back and how can combatants change their military identity to become socially accepted citizens of these communities?
2. How can former combatants find education, training and ultimately job opportunities in war-torn economies where there are very few salaried jobs, high competition, destroyed infrastructure, few opportunities for acquiring new skills and a lack of cash-flow to start successful micro-businesses?

The following are key conflict risks and challenges in relation to socio-economic reintegration:

Addressing socio-economic causes of conflict: In many conflict-affected countries, frustrations at perceived or actual socio-economic exclusion plays a significant role in fuelling conflict and motivating some people to join armed groups and/or engage in other types of violence. This is especially important in post-conflict contexts, where goods, jobs and services are scarce, and where socio-economic dynamics are characterised by the exclusion of certain groups. In addition, political leaders or warlords often exploit existing feelings of injustice as a way to underpin their mobilisation efforts. Efforts to rebuild post-war societies must, therefore, be based on an understanding and acknowledgement of the underlying frustrations and insecurities of people and include an element of change in order to tackle them. This is certainly true for reintegration programmes which, by offering support such as training and employment opportunities, have the potential to contribute to a reduction in previous socio-economic exclusion of some.

Risk of undermining human security: While government forces and rebels might be at war, soldiers and armed combatants are normally provided with food, housing and salaries, or the tacit agreement to acquire these forcefully from communities. Peace and demobilisation threaten to take these advantages away from them and their families. Former combatants may therefore see this process as threatening both their physical and socio-economic security. Consequently, their willingness and ability to reintegrate largely depends on finding sustainable livelihoods. These livelihoods must, however, offer an attractive alternative to their existing way of life.

² Available at <http://dansmithsblog.com/2009/09/10/reintegrating-ex-fighters-is-about-more-than-the-ex-fighters>

Someone who has made a good living as a fighter is unlikely to give this up to scrape together a living by digging ditches, for example.

Benefiting the perpetrators? DDR, and particularly the reintegration aspect, is a potentially unfair process, assisting the perpetrators of violence while victims might not get any assistance at all, or far less or much later. However, in order for a country to move forward on the road to peace, security and development, it is necessary to assist former fighters to rapidly find a constructive and meaningful place in society. A key challenge is clearly communicating this message to communities and ensuring that the benefits of reintegration are felt more broadly. While DDR should not become the overall peacebuilding programme, it is important to ensure that it does not fuel further conflict at the community level by being seen to be inherently unfair and bestowing “undeserved” benefits to some while leaving others’ needs unaddressed. It is therefore important to include other community members in the assistance programmes and/or to ensure that community members receive indirect benefits from reintegration. Reintegration programmes that failed to do this in the past have created a “market” for DDR by sending the message that people must first become combatants before they can get access to schools and/or jobs.

Overcoming barriers to economic activity: In addition to international organisations, donors and local civil society, reintegration programmes need to work with business communities to create an enabling environment for reintegration. Most jobs are created in and by the private sector. However, in attracting and engaging the private sector in reintegration, many challenges and constraints exist: the lack of capital to restart or expand, high levels of investment risk and high costs of doing business characterise conflict-affected economies, reducing economic growth and related job creation. This increases the risk of further conflict as high numbers of unemployed youth (ex-combatant or civilian) provide a fruitful ground for violent outbreaks and criminality, and ultimately a return to armed conflict. ► (See also practice notes in this series on business environment reforms and market development).

Lack of private-sector engagement: Even where jobs in the private sector do exist, business people are often unwilling to give them to former combatants. This may be because they mistrust their motives, doubt their reliability and skills, or perceive them as a potential security threat in their workplace. In addition, reintegration programmes designed by the international community may not adequately incentivise or reach out to private business. Reintegration programmes therefore often face challenges in mobilising the private sector effectively. Designing and implementing targeted economic projects, and actively involving the local private sector in the implementation of projects that have the potential to boost local economies will ensure benefits, and therefore acceptance of ex-combatants by the communities.

Lack of appropriate funding channels and programming: Even where the importance of creating an environment for economic recovery, employment growth and good governance is recognised, funding at the right time and at the right level is often hard to come by, as DDR programmes are seen to be expensive enough on their own. It has furthermore proven difficult, though absolutely necessary, to have sufficient funding available to prepare communities and service providers (including local businesses) *before* combatants are actually demobilised.

Poor design and implementation of vocational education and training projects: Vocational education and training projects in DDR are generally poorly designed and implemented. The choice of skills and curricula is rarely based on labour

market information, the private sector (as potential employers) is rarely consulted or involved in the planning, there is no certification system, and trainings that are delivered are often inadequate due to lack of experience and equipment among those delivering them, be they private or public providers.

Insufficient support to new entrepreneurs: The lack of follow-up with new and inexperienced jobseekers or entrepreneurs is a significant flaw in many initiatives. Without further assistance, only a few of the mostly inexperienced entrepreneurs make it in the harsh competition and conditions in a conflict-affected marketplace and economy. For example, efforts to include graduates of vocational training schemes into value chains of the existing local or international private sector are relatively rare. While some successes are registered 3-5 months after the training, impact evaluations 2-3 years later often report failure rates up to 60-80 percent among newly established businesses. This is evidence that a longer-term approach needs to be taken by planners and implementers in order to increase the sustainability of these initiatives.

Political sensitivity: This note would also like to acknowledge the political sensitivity necessary when planning and implementing DDR programmes. These programmes are often implemented in a fragile post-conflict environment with tensions and violence often still prevalent. The implementation of DDR programmes can appear to make judgements regarding who is the victor in the conflict – i.e. how armed factions are demobilised, who is chosen to be reintegrated into a national army versus reintegrated into civilian life, etc. In addition, DDR programmes must consider the country context when choosing appropriate terminology. For instance, certain countries do not acknowledge the term “reintegration” and instead use terms such as “rehabilitation”. Other countries avoid the word “demobilisation” and use “downsizing” instead.

2.3. Key peacebuilding opportunities

Successful reintegration can lay the ground for wider economic recovery and conflict transformation: One way of ensuring this is to use DDR as an entry point for longer-term economic recovery. Economic initiatives with private-sector actors in the local communities might be geared, in the first phase, towards creating reintegration opportunities for ex-combatants, but will also be of benefit to the wider community if local economies are boosted through these initiatives.

The end of conflict furthermore provides windows of opportunities to introduce more radical economic and social reforms that address some of the root causes of the conflict.³ Policies to (re)build labour market governance can, for instance, play a socially healing role by including sound labour legislation that provides for the equitable treatment of workers. While the term re-integration might give the impression that the goal is to recreate the pre-conflict situation, the objective of a solid reintegration programme is to address some of the root causes of the conflict, to address the reasons why people joined the different armed groups and forces and to use the end of the war to try to create a better society.

Successful reintegration can contribute to improving the business climate and vice versa: It is common sense that improved security will facilitate the private sector to expand and create more job opportunities as well as lowering their operating costs and outlays on security provision and guards. Thus a successful DDR process, which

3 See Practice note 5: Supporting the Economic Dimensions of Peace Processes.

will lead to improved security, has a direct impact on the business climate. It is also understood that economic instability is a conflict driver and that without economic recovery and related job creation, reintegration will not be effective or lasting. What is less understood is that private-sector development can actually be a key instrument in improving security and stability.

Successful reintegration can help tackle youth unemployment: Evidence shows that significant levels of youth unemployment can create the grounds for violent conflict and that violent conflict furthermore aggravates youth unemployment, dragging countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone into negative spirals of conflicts. Well-designed reintegration programmes can help break this vicious cycle if they take the specific needs and profiles of youth into account. This is of particular importance given that many former fighters were recruited as child soldiers and therefore have no previous work experience or skills.

Successful reintegration will increase community cohesion and local economic development: 'To reduce their capacity for destabilization, ex-combatants will usually need specifically designed, sustainable support to help them with their transition from military to civilian life. Yet the United Nations must also ensure that such support does not mean that other war-affected groups are treated unfairly or resentment is caused within the wider community'.⁴ Designing and implementing targeted economic projects, and actively involving the local private sector in the implementation of projects that have the potential to boost local economies will ensure benefits, and therefore acceptance of ex-combatants by the communities. This will result in increased community cohesion and local economic development.

DDR programmes can boost local economies: DDR programmes are for some countries one of the rare occasions to get high levels of external funding. If used wisely, for example, by strengthening existing services instead of setting up parallel structures, DDR programmes can make a serious contribution to local economic recovery and improving services for the broader population such as availability of more and better vocational and business training, improved employment services, restarting of businesses through DDR-related contracts, etc.

3: Major actors, institutions and processes

Reintegration processes are complex and require the involvement of a range of actors. It is crucial, from the beginning, to promote social dialogue among governments (both national and donor), the security sector, civil society, the private sector and international humanitarian and development actors, and to sensitise them about their role and responsibilities for the reintegration process and its long-term sustainability. If all actors work together towards achieving the same goals and objectives, the likelihood of success is far greater. The stakeholders that play a key role in reintegration programmes can be divided into the following categories below.

National government

There may be a coordinating government-led body for DDR, such as a DDR commission. In addition, some line ministries play a crucial role such as a lead agency for economic recovery (e.g. ministry of commerce, labour). It is however

⁴ Module 4.30 – Social and Economic Reintegration, Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. United Nations, New York, 2006

3

Section 3: Major actors, institutions and processes

important to recognise that there are multiple agencies with an interest in reintegration issues at a national level (e.g. ministries of agriculture, mines, infrastructure, health, education, gender, natural resources) and also at a provincial level. In order to achieve sustainability, all relevant governmental actors need to be involved. Also, these ministries are themselves often providing direct services as well (such as agricultural extension services) and although their capacity is often weak or absent, local government also plays a key role in reintegration processes.

The government's ability to participate in the design and managing the delivery of reintegration assistance programmes might still be limited in the immediate post-conflict phase by capacity and competing priorities. Nevertheless, international agencies must engage with the government both to build its capacity and reinforce its legitimacy if reintegration and ultimately economic recovery programmes are to be successful. So far, most capacity-building efforts in reintegration are geared towards DDR commissions, which are a temporary set-up. Ensuring sustainability of services and processes requires much more work with the relevant line ministries.

International agencies

In DDR many international agencies are involved, often in strong competition over donor funding. The UN Inter Agency Working Group on DDR has reduced this at the UN level. However, between various multilateral and bilateral agencies (such as the UN, the World Bank, the International Organisation for Migration, GTZ, USAID), tensions remain, often driven by differing institutional mandates, working methods, and limited resources. These tensions often hinder programme coherence and create confusion among national actors. International agencies need to find a way to tackle this problem, so that specific donor requirements are fulfilled, yet allowing for cooperation and communication regarding gaps and overlap in DDR programming. Their core task in DDR should be to reinforce the capacities of national and local stakeholders to implement a successful and sustainable programme. Organisational "niche" branding works against effective coordination and reinforces the local population's belief that their government cannot deliver services to the people. This should be avoided, as trust in the government, private sector and local civil society is needed to (re)build a cohesive and peaceful nation.

Civil society

Civil society, including NGOs, CBOs and religious organisations are in fact implementing the large majority of reintegration programmes, often under supervision of UN agencies and international NGOs.

In the context of reintegration, NGOs are often the only actors that have a real presence at the local level. They generally have a better understanding of the realities, potentials and risks in the local community and economy. They might have significant resources for delivering activities in support of economic reintegration, recovery and social services as part of the reintegration phase of a DDR process. However, they often need to build their capacity and strengthen their activities to cater to the often large numbers of ex-combatants to be reintegrated. This can prove a major challenge and put pressure on the effectiveness and accountability of an NGO.

As well as directly implementing reintegration activities, local NGOs should also be empowered by international NGOs to play a monitoring and evaluation role and give feedback on the positive and/or negative impacts of programmes and actors. Frequently, civil society actors are limited to being mere "implementers" of top-down DDR and other peacebuilding programmes and have little say in the design and nuance of the work.

Military agencies

International forces where present in several post-conflict settings have begun to play a role in delivering, or supporting delivery of, so-called Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). The military is often able to access areas where international agencies are unable to operate due to security concerns. Successful economic QIPs serve military purposes in hostile environments, such as buying loyalty of the population which can help in patrolling and accessing information, but can also (if planned as such) lay the ground for economic recovery, private-sector development and reintegration.⁵ It is therefore crucial to have civilian actors involved as soon as the security situation allows.

The private sector

Private-sector actors are often unacknowledged major players in reintegration programmes. Private training institutions and employers can play a key role in training ex-combatants, and small, medium and large businesses are potential employers. Due to the lack of salaried jobs, most ex-combatants end up being entrepreneurs themselves. Furthermore, the private sector is one of the primary beneficiaries of peace and reintegration. It frequently continues to be a significant employer during war-time (both with licit and illicit activities), and a potential source of peace-time jobs during transitions. The private sector includes multinational, large, medium and micro-enterprises, formal as well as informal. The next section offers thoughts on how to engage the private sector effectively in different phases of DDR.

In addition to the actors listed above, many countries have **universities and research centres** that play a role in data collection and research in the field of post-conflict reconstruction, including DDR.

Finally, **national security sector actors**, such as the police play a role in ensuring local security, which is a precondition for sustainable reintegration.

Youth

In today's conflicts, and DDR programmes, the majority of combatants are youth.⁶ Young men and women's direct involvement in war is a widespread phenomenon, and is especially marked when prolonged wars strip societies of their adult generation and require armies or fighting forces to resort to the younger generations as cheap, effective, and obedient fighters. 'Combined with high rates of youth unemployment and inadequate access to schooling, young people are vulnerable to, and often volunteer themselves for, recruitment'.⁷ It is crucial to understand what leads young people to fight, in order to maximise the efficiency of interventions. Poverty, youth unemployment and unequal access to economic opportunities are among the underlying causes of most conflicts.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand and programme for different groups within the youth population. Areas that need attention include differences between girls and boys, youth from rural or urban areas, different education levels, their ranks and roles in the armed groups, etc.

5 *Stabilisation through Economic Initiatives: Private Sector Development (PSD)*, Stabilisation Unit, Department for International Development. January 2009. Available at <http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/resources/PrivSecSINJan09.pdf>

6 I. Specht and L. Attree (2006). 'The reintegration of teenage girls and young women'. *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict*, 3(4), pp.219-228, November 2006.

7 The UN defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, the perceptions of who comprise youth differ considerably from one context to another. Social, economic and cultural systems define the age limits and roles and responsibilities of children, adults and the "in-between" group called youth.

4

Section 4: Existing good practice and guidance

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Assist in early preparation and planning for reintegration

DDR programmes are generally prepared in a rush and coordination can be a challenge. This might be understandable in countries where peace occurs suddenly. This is hardly ever the case, as peace processes in most countries are prolonged. While it is necessary to wait for a formal agreement to implement or support a DDR programme and for the international community to be invited by the national government to do so, there is still a significant amount of preparatory work that can be done to pave the way. It may not be possible to do this under the explicit banner of DDR as it might be a particularly sensitive issue, particularly if peace negotiations are under way, but there are areas where planning and preparation can add huge value.

Often the jobs and opportunities that are offered as part of reintegration packages do not match the reality of the labour market and employment opportunities. Hence early planning work could include labour market analysis, including regional and rural/urban variation. This would then help to ensure that job creation and skills-training initiatives were appropriate and market-driven. They also need to be in place in time once ex-combatants have completed the DD phase, which is rarely the case. One of the failures of current DDR efforts is that DD is completed without any real reintegration options already prepared. Economic development planners and practitioners can make important contributions to stimulate and support such early thinking and provide their expertise in early assessments, such as mapping economic opportunities and related vocational training needs.

Support reintegration throughout different phases of economic recovery

'Reintegration programmes should also aim to build local and national capacities to manage the process in the long term, as reintegration increasingly turns into reconstruction and development'.⁸ The recent UN policy paper on post-conflict economic recovery⁹ defines three phases of recovery and describes programmes appropriate to each phase:

1. Early recovery: stabilising income-generation and emergency employment;
2. Transition: local economic recovery for employment opportunities and reintegration; and
3. Development: sustainable employment creation and decent work.

This model provides a useful starting point for improving economic recovery and reintegration programming, which in fact takes place throughout all three phases. In this, it is crucial to ensure that reintegration is embedded in the overall peace and development plans of a country. While these plans might not be ready yet at the start of DDR, linkages must be established gradually. Economic development plans and interventions during each phase should therefore also reflect long-term reintegration priorities and needs. National actors and responsible line ministries must be capacitated to continue the work after the DDR programme has ended.

Follow enlarged targeting principles

Similarly, the phasing of DDR should include a slow transition from more targeted approaches in the early phases, to more enlarged, community-based assistance

8 Module 4.30 – Social and Economic Reintegration, *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)*, United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. United Nations, New York, 2006

9 UN system-wide policy paper for 'Employment creation, income generation and integration in post-conflict settings'. Draft for approval, 25th June 2007.

for the broader conflict-affected population later on. Early on (during a phase that that termed “reinsertion” by the UN)), it might be necessary in some countries to have short-term projects exclusively for ex-combatants. However, as soon as the real reintegration assistance starts, which is provided in the community, it becomes crucial to mix ex-combatants with community members with similar profiles. As the programme continues, the ratio of community members to ex-combatants should increase. Towards the end of the programme, ‘ex-combatants should be treated as part of the “war-affected people”. [...] When a country is returning to normalcy, when displaced people and refugees have more or less been resettled, a long-term development strategy should be introduced, following peace-time categories’.¹⁰ However, one of the challenges of expanding the target group for programming is the difficulty of gaining funding on the ground to cover a much larger stakeholder group. Costs and social benefits should be carefully balanced.

Support Community-Based Reintegration (CBR)

There is currently a lively discussion on whether to change the traditional targeted reintegration approaches to become more community-based. The centralised approach generally taken in large and diverse areas seems impossible to implement in a context-specific manner, which is an absolute requirement for making reintegration meaningful, successful, and ultimately sustainable. National reintegration programmes and frameworks need to be designed and implemented in a way that leaves more space for adaptation to local realities.

The following models are based upon good practice in the field.¹¹ Implementing partners should identify which model (or combination of models) they want to implement, depending upon local circumstances. In this manner, it is possible to implement a national community-based reintegration programme that leaves space for adaptation, as organisations can choose the most appropriate model for local circumstances, but maintain uniformity for monitoring and evaluation at a national level.

A) Enlarged DDR	In service delivery, 50 per cent of the beneficiaries are ex-combatants, the other 50 per cent are members of the local community, preferably with a similar profile (age, educational levels, ambitions, etc.). The project is designed with a strong focus on service delivery to ex-combatants, based upon their socio-economic profiles.
B) Community-owned/ driven DDR	The community is empowered to cater for ex-combatants. Communities determine the exact nature of the reintegration project and execute it with the help of a local NGO or structure. The community is “in the driver’s seat”.
C) DDR with additional community benefits	A traditional targeted DDR programme that assists ex-combatants separately, but the DDR programme also offers the community a project that they can determine themselves (e.g. road repair, school renovation, sports facilities, etc.). In this way, the ex-combatants come with direct benefits to the community.

¹⁰ I. Specht and C. van Empel (1998). *Enlargement – A challenge for social and economic reintegration: Targeting ex-combatants or all war-affected people? The Liberian experience*. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

¹¹ Models developed by Transition International, 2007.

D) Community recovery project with the explicit aim of including ex-combatants	Generic community recovery projects with a strong element of reintegration for war-affected groups, including ex-combatants but also returning refugees, IDPs, and those that stayed behind.
E) Arms for development	Disarmament with benefits for the community, including ex-combatants, in exchange for arms collected, which are handed over by the community. A certain number of arms will provide a development project.
F) CBR through vouchers	Programme targeted at ex-combatants where cash payments are replaced by vouchers that can be used only in their own communities, among local businesses. Community benefits are indirect in a rather traditional targeted programme.
G) Targeted DDR with community involvement	Reintegration programme targeted mainly (or only) at ex-combatants, where community structures such as boards of elders, and/or similar local mechanisms are mobilised to support the process. Child DDR programmes often take this approach by setting up community structures such as child welfare committees.
H) DDR-light	A combination of models A, C, and G. Enlarged DDR (50 per cent ex-combatants and 50 per cent civilians) with community involvement (welfare committees) and direct community benefits (i.e. projects).

This is an attempt to find solutions to the multitude of problems faced in the process of reintegration of ex-combatants. It is a call to move from the “one size fits all”, centralised approach to more realistic, pragmatic, and sustainable approaches that build upon local realities.

Understand what makes them fight

When searching for answers on reintegration of ex-combatants, whether adults or children, it should be understood that some individual combatants are fighting for or against something that might not be related at all to the political motives of their leaders. Searching for methods of social healing and reintegration requires a deep understanding of the precise motives of why combatants start and stop fighting. Political analyses of conflicts, studies on the structure of rebel movements and the goals of leaders, assessments of economic potentials, etc., need to be complemented by anthropological studies on the cultural and religious backgrounds of the combatants, the motives of communities and/or parents to send their children to fight, and the socio-cultural status of the ex-combatants in their communities upon return, or indeed, non-return.¹²

Ensure reintegration programmes are based on socio-economic profiling, opportunity mapping and labour-market analysis

The importance of basing reintegration programmes upon serious socio-economic profiling and opportunity mapping in the local labour markets is crucial. ‘Reintegration programmes that are not structured to correspond to the dynamics of the local labour market and economy are prone to failure in the long, if not the immediate, term. This commitment must also be complemented with sufficient resources made available at

12 I. Specht (2003). ‘Jobs for rebels and soldiers’, in E. Date-Bah (Ed.). *Jobs after war – A critical challenge in the peace and reconstruction puzzle*. In Focus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, International Labour Office, Geneva, Ch. 4, pp.73-109.

the appropriate time for the information to be gathered, analysed and put to effective use'.¹³ Economic actors are often best placed to undertake these assessments as they know and understand local economic dynamics and opportunities.

Increase employability based on existing need

The existing vocational training systems often do not respond to the demands in the (changed) labour market. Based upon the collected labour market data, courses should be identified that are in real demand in the local economies. It is crucial to involve the local private-sector actors to develop business-oriented curricula. When working towards improving the employability of people in DDR contexts, it is of crucial importance to empower girls and women to fully benefit from the new opportunities created.

Create opportunities

Based upon the assessments, targeted interventions to boost local economies with expected high return of ex-combatants should be developed. Well designed economic Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) can lay the groundwork for this, but how much is needed also depends on the level of pre-war economic activities, and how much is possible on the political interest of the donors. While DDR cannot achieve economic recovery, it is often the first programme on the ground, and without specific investments that create more economic opportunities, reintegration will fail.

Ensure services are in place

The large majority of former combatants will end up as entrepreneurs, as salaried jobs are rarely available during the stabilisation period. Therefore, the availability of good quality services to assist those starting businesses is one of the most crucial areas. These services include skills training, referral, business training, business support services, micro-finance, business mentoring, life-skills training, psycho-social assistance, health services, etc. If such services are not available in sufficient quantities, funding is required to (re)establish them as soon as possible. Effective planning includes establishing realistic timeframes that can ensure that the necessary services are in place at the point when they are most needed. One of the biggest failures of DDR programmes is that the required services are not in place when (DD)R starts, and that provision of services is too short-term to really empower beneficiaries to achieve sustainable economic reintegration.

Engage with the private sector, early and effectively

So far, there has been a tendency to underestimate how important the private sector can and should be in reintegration processes. First of all, the private sector is among the primary beneficiaries of the reduction of violence, which enables it to restart or boost its activities. For reintegration planners, it is crucial to recognise that it is the private sector that will employ and train the target group, and create an enabling environment for the new entrepreneurs to become successful. It is therefore essential to assess in detail what the private sector's exact role could be in a given country.

Private-sector development experts can play a crucial role in taking steps to engage the private sector effectively and early on in the process. This has to include offering tangible benefits and incentives for it to engage; as well as helping to address the private sector's own concerns and needs (see also the practice notes on Business Environment Reforms in Conflict-Affected Contexts and Market Development in Conflict-Affected Contexts).

¹³ Transition International and Nodefic (2008). 'Socio-economic profiling and opportunity mapping'. Available at www.transitioninternational.com

What can the private sector do for reintegration?¹⁴

During Disarmament and Demobilisation: Existing businesses should be provided with contracts in relation to DD, for example for the construction of demobilisation camps. In their contracts, specific conditions, such as provision of “on-the-job” training should be included. Employers should also be brought into the demobilisation camps where counselling is normally provided. Here, they can explain to the ex-combatants what expectations from employers they will have to meet, if they wish to get civilian jobs.

Immediate short-term reintegration options: The ex-combatants could be involved in public infrastructure works such as reconstruction of schools, water systems, hospitals, roads, garbage collection, etc. Since these works are highly visible, they may improve the image of the ex-combatants among the public and may become a first step towards their reintegration, especially if other members of the community are included in the work force. Small contractors will hire the target group to undertake these jobs. If such reintegration options are well designed, they may create many jobs not only in the short term but also in the long term. Existing contractors should be trained and used as contractors and some skilled ex-combatants/refugees/IDPs can become contractors themselves. These kind of options offer significant potential but have not been adequately explored to date.

Apprenticeships: Apprenticeships have been proven an effective form of vocational training. An apprenticeship will, in principle, be unpaid work since it forms part of the training process. One big advantage of apprenticeships is that the trainee might be offered a job at the end. Existing businesses should be boosted to increase the number of apprentices they can take on. This can be done by providing the potential master a contract to produce materials for the reintegration programme (such as toolkits, assets for the Demobilisation camp, furniture for refugee camps, reconstruction of a building or road, furniture for schools, etc.) that will boost his or her business. Apprenticeship programmes should reflect the local tradition in the country as far as is possible, to ensure sustainability.

Combining apprenticeships with formal education: In order to successfully reintegrate demobilised youth and children, the Liberian Child DDR programme created strong linkages to the private sector in terms of placing demobilised youth in workshops as apprentices. Relatively high percentages of apprentices remained with their masters to work in their workshops and combined this with schooling. Combining education and skills training seems very effective; it keeps the youth occupied, provides immediate income, provides a large network of new friends and gears their hopes toward a better future as they are progressing in school.¹⁵

Mentoring and value chains: One of the important points in economic reintegration is to work towards diversification. This requires intensive support to small businesses and trade, taking into account the various needs and different requirements of people and groups who are starting or restarting their economic activities in the private sector. It should be emphasised that a new business initiative needs extensive support to avoid failure due to inexperience, attitude or competition. Most DDR contexts lack effective business support and services (Business Development Services, or BDS), therefore existing business

14 Stabilisation through Economic Initiatives: Private Sector Development (PSD), Stabilisation Unit, Department for International Development. January 2009. Available at <http://www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/resources/PrivSecSINJan09.pdf>

15 I. Specht and H. Tefferi (2007). Impact evaluation of the reintegration programme of Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF) in Liberia, UNICEF Liberia.

people should be contracted to provide BDS services to the new entrepreneurs. Value chains should be assessed to identify whether and how the new businesses can be linked to existing enterprises in their chains of production. This will guarantee a certain level of productivity and ensure that products are made that are actually in demand.

Be sensitive to gender dynamics in socio-economic reintegration

Many comments and criticisms can be made regarding women in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes. Progress has certainly been made in recent years as gender guidelines, checklists, and interesting articles and books have appeared on the subject. Many lessons have been learned, but the question remains whether DDR assistance to women combatants is actually improving and becoming more attractive to the women themselves.¹⁶ The following points need to be ensured:

- Identify and reach girls and young female combatants, and those associated with armed groups and armed forces, as they do form a substantial and increasing share of armed groups. The better reintegration programmes do early assessments on the needs and potential of all the different subgroups of men, women, boys and girls and provide tailor-made assistance to them;
- Ensure effective economic reintegration of girls and women in sectors that actually have potential to grow and provide for decent income; and
- Assess if affirmative action is required and appropriate.

Equip youth

The challenge to make DDR respond to the needs and aspirations of youth is indeed enormous. Neglecting them is simply unacceptable as they constitute the majority of DDR programmes' target group. DDR policy-makers and implementers should recognise youth's resilience, coping strategies and distinct experiences in conflict situations. Young people can provide leadership and inspiration to their societies if they are given opportunities. It is important that youth find a meaningful role in the post-conflict period that is equivalent in terms of responsibility and status to the role they played during conflict. The value systems of armed factions do not need to be violent, nor are they necessarily chaotic or anarchic. 'They are rooted in the specific way a group manages restrictions and regulations. Rather than trying to break down these modalities during the demobilization process, they should be considered as valuable social capital that can put be put to peaceful use in the right circumstances and environment'.¹⁷ They should have a stake in the post-conflict social order so that they support it rather than undermine it.¹⁸

Ensure sustainability

The need for capacity-building of national actors to support demobilised and other children, youth and adults after a formal DDR process must be stressed. Also, programmes require sufficient resources and solid understanding of local realities to ensure sustainable reintegration and avoid re-recruitment. The need for longer-term assistance per person, and robust monitoring and follow-up of DDR programmes requires long-term commitment on the part of the agencies and donors involved.

16 I. Specht and L. Attree (November 2006). 'The reintegration of teenage girls and young women'. *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict*, 3(4), pp.219-228.

17 K. Peters, (2005) *Reintegrating young ex-combatants in Sierra Leone: Accommodating indigenous and wartime value systems*, pp.267-296, p.295.

18 I. Specht (August 2006). 'Juventud Y reinsercion', *Ideas para la Paz*. Fundación Ideas para la paz, Bogota. Colombia

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Section 5: Where to find out more

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International Standards, <http://unddr.org/iddrs/framework.php>

The IDDRS have been drafted on the basis of lessons and best practices drawn from the experience of all the departments, agencies, funds and programmes involved to provide the UN system with a set of standards for the planning, implementation and monitoring of DDR programmes.

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Economic reintegration

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Child and Youth DDR

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- *The Paris Principles and Paris Commitments to Protect Children* (Consolidated version). February 2007, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/paris-principles-commitments-300107>.

Training

- Reintegration of Ex-combatants – Transition International and International Alert, <http://www.international-alert.org/training/course.php?c=14>
- Senior and Middle Management Course on DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-combatants) – Folke Bernadotte Academy and Swedish National Defence College, http://www.folkebernadotteacademy.se/roach/EDUCATION__TRAINING.do?pagelId=21
- Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Planning course – Nodetic/NORDCAPS, http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00117/COURSE__-_NORDCAPS__117218a.pdf
- The Role of Economic Actors in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building – Folke Bernadotte Academy, http://www.folkebernadotteacademy.se/roach/EDUCATION__TRAINING.do?pagelId=21

About the Practice Note Series

This practice note forms part of a series of Peacebuilding Essentials for Economic Development Practitioners that Alert is producing, in partnership with leading experts and practitioners from relevant fields, in the course of 2009-2010. The aims of the series are to:

- Introduce economic development practitioners to key economic recovery and peacebuilding challenges in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts;
- Share lessons and good practice on how to strengthen the economic dimensions of peacebuilding;
- Provide practitioners and planners with the knowledge and tools to ensure that their interventions are conflict-sensitive;
- Promote experience-sharing between economic development and peacebuilding practitioners, to enhance synergies between the two.

Topics covered in the series to date include:

- Market Development in Conflict-Affected Contexts
- Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants
- Foreign Direct Investment in Conflict-Affected Contexts
- Business Environment Reforms in Conflict-Affected Contexts
- Supporting the Economic Dimensions of Peace Processes
- Natural Resource Governance in Conflict-Affected Contexts

About the Project

'Strengthening the Economic Dimensions of Peacebuilding' forms part of International Alert's wider work, ongoing since 1999, on improving business conduct and promoting a peacebuilding approach to economic interventions in conflict-prone and conflict-affected contexts. Our firm belief is that just and lasting peace requires broadly shared economic opportunities, including decent work, to redress economic issues and grievances that fuelled violent conflict in the first place, and to address the economic impacts

of conflict on the livelihoods and lives of conflict-affected populations.

Indeed strengthening the private sector and market-based economies has become a key concern for development assistance in recent years, including in countries affected by conflict. But while the links between peacebuilding and the economy may be obvious, it is less clear how a peacebuilding approach to such economic interventions can be achieved in practice, and how they can be made conflict-sensitive. Understanding the ways in which these interventions can interact with pre-existing conflict dynamics is crucial given that the allocation of resources and economic opportunities feature prominently as root causes in many conflicts; therefore any external intervention targeting the economic sphere is bound to interact with core conflict issues and the economic legacies left by violent conflict. This will be to the detriment of the local conflict context, and programmes, alike.

The objectives of the overall project are three-fold:

1. To identify lessons in order to generate evidence-based resources and guidance for policymakers and practitioners to improve the conflict-sensitivity and peacebuilding impacts of economic interventions
2. To promote uptake of such good practice
3. To put the links between economic recovery and peacebuilding on the agenda of relevant national and international actors through advocacy, outreach and networking

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To find out more, visit

http://www.international-alert.org/peace_and_economy/index.php?t=3

About International Alert

International Alert is an independent peacebuilding organisation that has worked for over 20 years to lay the foundations for lasting peace and security in communities affected by violent conflict. Our multifaceted approach focuses both in and across various regions; aiming to shape policies and practices that affect peacebuilding; and helping build skills and capacity through training.

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