Disarming Rebels or Empowering Communities? : Aid Strategies in Reintegration of Former Combatants

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Abstract

Humanitarian assistance to stabilization and long-term development in post conflict contexts is today confronted with the problem of metrics and measurement which necessitates a conceptual and policy shift from locating outcomes at the macro level to focusing on localized successes and failures. This is more the story with the return and reintegration process of ex-combatants, which is always a canvas built up of micro stories. With growing interest in upstream processes of stabilization and reconstruction, current practice suggests, donor priorities at strategic and operational levels may be dissonant, process and outcome unmatched, and agents and recipients may view reintegration through divergent lens. In light of this, the paper debates merits of a community focused reintegration approach and how far donors are in tune with field realities in designing this incipient shift in reintegration support.

Introduction

One of the primary debates in aid disbursement strategies for post-conflict and fragile states is how to mitigate security risks to peace-building efforts. As a result, over the past decade more extant and better funded peacekeeping missions have included disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes to minimise security risks from ex-combatants as possible spoilers. This mode of thinking undermines the fact that by disarming, combatants are forging a new social contract with the government and the international community. Combatants surrender the security and economic surety that their weapons provide, in exchange for opportunities and assistance in finding new peaceful livelihoods. In this three-fold process of return, however it is increasingly accepted that the 'R' or 'reintegration' stage is critical in minimising conflict relapse. At the same time much programmatic debate on humanitarian and development assistance delivery to post-conflict societies concerns the question of whether support should be targeted to the individual or dispersed into the broader community. DDR efforts for long focused solely on ex-combatants who are perceived as security threats and given compensation in the form of education and vocational skills support to enable their smooth return to civilian life. This privileging of ex-combatants through DDR 'programmes' undermines the process of return, and creates stigma which make social acceptance problematic, since community members and civilians are equally impoverished and in need for aid support. This has triggered a shift in strategy to more inclusive approaches where ex-combatants are viewed as a human resource and empowered through skills in community based reintegration (CBR) projects that also benefit civilians. The purpose is to strike a fine balance in targeting strategies inorder to ensure a community-based recovery and encourage positive social reintegration. This paper addresses two issues. First, it highlights policy neglect on the continuities between war time social relationships, nature of rebel group-civilian interaction with post conflict challenges in social reintegration and wider reconciliation between communities and returning combatants. In light of this gap, the paper debates merits of a community focused reintegration approach and how far donors are in tune with field realities in designing this incipient shift in reintegration support.

DDR: Theoretical Explorations

Since the end of Cold War, DDR initiatives have been undertaken in more than 25 war-to-peace transition contexts namely, Afghanistan, Aceh, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, East Timor, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Côte d' Ivoire, Kosovo, Liberia, Mindanao, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda. In 2007, over 1,129,000 combatants took part in DDR programmes in 20 countries. The estimated cost involved was nearly USD 2 billion. Two thirds of the former combatants were from African countries, 42 percent were members of the Armed Forces, and 58 percent belonged to armed militias, guerrilla groups and paramilitary groups. Of these nearly 10 percent were child soldiers. The estimated per capita cost was around USD 1,686 per person (Özerdem, 2010).

Current theorisations on DDR can be located within a continuum ranging between the minimalist perspective espoused by the UN, in terms of - improving security on the one hand, and the maximalist understanding of DDR as an opportunity for development and reconstruction embraced by the World Bank on the other (Knight and Özerdem, 2004:506). The importance of recognizing the complementarities of the minimalist and maximalist standpoints is revealed when DDR is conceptualized as a social contract. In the 'social order' of war, a weapon has both economic and security value for its owner in the sense that it can be used to make economic gains as well as preserve physical security. Hence DDR in such a context can be seen as a social contract forged between the combatant and the government and/or international community. DDR therefore, represents commitment to, and faith in, the short- and long-term creation of an environment where the economic and security value of a weapon is gradually eliminated (Spark and Bailey, 2005: 599).

Within this coinage, **disarmament** and **demobilisation** are primarily concerned with consolidating security on the ground, which in turn can facilitate the initiation and commencement of reconstruction and developmental activities (Muggah, 2006: 241). **Reinsertion** and **reintegration** however constitute part of wider development affairs, with the long-term goal of reintegrating ex-combatants into communities, in terms of financial independence and acceptance by community members and leaders. Thus in a sense DDR bridges the controversial relief-development gap that spans short-term emergency and long-term development concerns (Kostner, 2001:1). In practice the sequential phases of D/ D / R and R do not follow any linear progressive logic, within this matrix, reintegration and the gradual process of transition into civilian roles is most complex. The challenge lies in that while DD phases offer statistical reference of numbers of weapons collected and persons disarmed, demobilised or reunited with families, reintegration remains essentially a process outside of numeric outputs (Pugel, 2008: 74).

Reintegration Debates

Conceptually, reintegration is essentially a 'theory less field' (Nilsson, 2005). Prevailing reintegration discourses underline the need for conceptualizing or approaching reintegration as constituted by distinct social, economic, psychological, political and security considerations (Berdal, 1998; UNDP, 2000; Kingma, 2002; Pugel, 2008). *Economic reintegration* involves vocational training, livelihood skills and catch up education programmes for children and youth which can provide sustainability to former fighters in their civilian life and interweaves short, medium and long term needs and resources (Özerdem, 2003). *Political Reintegration* is related to the re-establishment of order, justice, and the institutions of the state. It also involves mainstreaming of the ex-combatant population into state decision making processes; establishment of civilian control over the military institutions and enlistment of former fighters into the new national army as part of broader security sector reform (Kingma, 2000:28). *Social Reintegration* involves ambiguous yet critical issues of acceptance, community integration and interpersonal relationships (Nilsson, 2005; Pugel, 2008). I develop on the last dimension further.

Social reintegration at a practical level, relates to the way in which displaced communities and different groups of returnees renegotiate issues of resource distribution amidst extreme poverty, incapacity and dependence on external aid, international agency and donor support. Social reintegration subsumes insertion of a range of returnees into pre-war communities it includes efforts for rebuilding societies,

states and reconciling social differences. It also represents an exercise in renegotiation, i.e., of values, norms and attitudes which change over years of conflict. Hence a key issue to bear in mind here pertains to the fact that reintegration does not happen in a vacuum and is not isolated from previous experiences of recruitment and involvement in armed groups. Conceptually, social reintegration can be decoupled into horizontal and vertical pathways, and related to concepts of horizontal and vertical social capital which have been used to grasp intricacies of post war community cohesion, acceptance and support (Richards et al., 2005). Horizontal integration manifests in the form of friendships, engagement in associations, and interconnectedness. Vertical integration involves the engagement of the individual in the more visible vertical institutions of social capital such as decision-making, both at the community and national levels (Mac Clay and Özerdem, 2010). Community acceptance and involvement in mainstream politics figure prominently in societal reintegration since they impart new civilian social identities. Hence there are visible overlaps between different dimensions of the reintegration process. Variables of social security and community acceptance involve assumption of responsible roles such as marriage, family, and parenting responsibilities which create necessary social embeddedness and reinstate bonds which help ex-combatants sever ties and even refuse offers for re-recruitment (Podder, 2010).

Broader humanitarian assistance does have overlaps with reintegration support, for instance programmes targeting IDPs and refugees, or the conflict affected, which has become a key criterion for defining post conflict aid disbursement and donor support to recovery. The SIDDR review document (2005: 27-28) endorses the idea of establishing matching funds as a direct complement to DDR programmes that would provide communities with support for receiving ex-combatants, enhance public trust by designing more inclusive programmes and avoid discrimination. Involvement of international actors including donor governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, regional bodies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in programme design and delivery for DDR has in turn influenced targeting issues (See Table 1 below for comparison in targeting strategies). This has triggered a shift in strategy to more inclusive approaches where ex-combatants are viewed as a human resource and empowered through skills in community based reintegration (CBR) projects that also benefit civilians (Özerdem, 2002; Knight and Özerdem, 2004; Spark and Bailey, 2005; Muggah, 2005; Spear, 2006).

Table 1

FC-focused vs. Community-based Reintegration

Approach	Purpose	Objective	Characteristics	Activities
FC-focused reintegration	Provide FCs with tailored, individually focussed projects	Reduction of security risks through keeping FCs busy	Can create feelings of unfairness within community and to be used when FCs represent a long-term threat to security	Information, counselling and referral services. Micro project development through grants. Training & education
Community-based reintegration	Provide communities with tools and capacities to support reintegration of FCs, together with other vulnerable groups	Supports FCs reintegration as a component of wider community-based recovery programmes	Higher cost per FC. May not address FCs' concerns directly. Addresses needs of community as a whole	Community projects with greater inclusion of all social actors. Activities of peacebuilding and local security enhancement.

Source: Özerdem, 2009.[1]

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[1] This table was used as part of a lecture on DDR of Ex-combatants module, MA programme in Post War Recovery Studies, University of York, UK.

Community Based Reintegration

The genesis of a policy shift from traditional combatant focused to community focused reintegration programmes is in turn premised on the transition from security centred perspectives to a human resource lens. In this threat-resource continuum the return process of former combatants is eased by providing recovery possibilities in terms of vocational training, micro-credit, education and infrastructural reconstruction within a community context. Such an approach is sought to lessen animosity towards the ex-combatant group as sole beneficiaries of reintegration benefits and offers a more sustainable method of disbursing skills and training by involving local capacities and manpower atleast in theory. Community focused reintegration draws on several intersecting approaches. The ecological approach (Dawes and Donald, 2000; Boothy et al., 2006) views development processes as mediated by micro-, meso-, and macro-level transactions with agents such as family, peers, community groups, and wider institutions (Wessels and Monteiro, 2006: 309). The agency approach emphasizes capacities of youth as actors, the transitional nature of their situation, the importance for youth of defining identity and a place within society, and the differences between rural and urban areas of developing countries (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1950; Wessels and Monteiro, 2006: 309). These approaches coalesce to offer the community approach which views the *family* and *community* as the specific site for developing youths' capacities, and crafting a positive role and image. Countering these arguments scholars aligned with the social disruption analysis of war (Higson-Smith and Killian, 2000), however argue that conflict destabilizes the social set up, hence the ideal-typical pre-war community, does not exist when ex-combatants return home (Wessels and Monteiro, 2006:309-310).

Defining the 'community' is challenging both theoretically and on the ground, and particularly in the dislocation which marks post-conflict society. There is a tendency toward simplifying the complexities and intra-group dynamics of individual communities and homogenising them (Hobfoll 1998). Besides, there is a complete lack of any critical inquiry into what is 'community' in a post-war context. Does it conform to the traditional notions of a collective pool of human resources, human capacity, social ecology, culture and values or is it in a certain sense an 'affected community'? One that is depleted, by the ravages of conflict and hence markedly different in its ability to protect, and might even be a source for fuelling unresolved ethnic hatreds, social cleavages and violence (Strang et al. 2005:160-161).

Conflict and displacement result in loss of 'human capacity' within the community that subsume both physical and mental health domains of community members and the skills and knowledge of people. Resulting in a depleted 'social ecology and weakened 'social capital' (Lorentzen and Turpin, 1998). Community based reintegration attempts to reconcile these two strands, namely the social ecology framework with the constituent elements of social capital bonds. Bonding and bridging social capital reflects on the nature of horizontal relations, between individuals, between communities and between individuals and different communities. In one rendition, community reintegration entails 'a dual process of individual adaptation, community acceptance and support . . . through integration into community rhythms' (Wessels, 2006:199). For community-combatant relations, bonding social capital is important. Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue (Putnam, 2000: 22). Weakening of bonding social capital happens during conflict, due to death, displacement, and loss. This contributes to the decimation of social networks within society, as the vulnerability of people is increased. Returning combatants may even be perceived as a common enemy. In broadening the scope of reintegration efforts to incorporate needs of civilians and locate efforts within the site of reintegration namely home communities effectively expands reintegration into the arena of social reconciliation. Lack of current policy attention to the relationship and linkages between reconciliation and reintegration have been highlighted of late (Sriram and Herman, 2009: 466). Successful reintegration is premised on effective reconciliation and elements of social, transitional justice. These processes range from the basic need for co-existence to the more complex stage of re-establishing trust to foster more cooperative and constructive relationships (Stovel, 2007: 310). Social reconciliation draws on the ongoing development of functioning relationships at the community level, implicit in its success is the generation of trust. Ex-combatant presence and involvement in the community demonstrates acceptance, repairing damaged vertical/horizontal social capital and regenerates trust. Nonetheless, social reconciliation is a long and

arduous process that cannot be forced. As social capital is restored through the reconstruction effort, it also has positive implications for reconciliation. This is in the domain of the ideal. Social reintegration in reality is often different and rejection is a prominent theme in the return experience of ex-combatants.[2]

Community based reintegration approaches apparently have the merit of inclusion, enabling communication, forgiveness, unity and reconciliation and thereby strengthening social cohesion. Yet, focus on post conflict individual outcomes cannot be unrelated to the history of mobilization, participation, and conflict related violence. Social and communal dimensions of conflict are however routinely overlooked in international responses and donor strategies. This relationship between individual reintegration and communal recovery is played out in all spheres of social, economic and political reconstruction. By leveraging these continuities there is scope to develop indicators based on outcomes such social acceptance, political participation, income, sustenance, independence, education, vocation and training correlates across temporal variants. Given the continuities between the pre-war and post war landscapes, peace outcomes are more often than not related to the actions and social history of conflict which are experience locally. Here I turn to issues of contextualising local histories and social dynamics.

Contextualising the Local

The interaction between civilians and rebel groups, combatants during war helps disaggregate complexities which may interfere with a successful community based reintegration strategy at national, communal and interpersonal levels. Rebel groups' act within local, social, economic and historical contexts, hence their tactics of violence need to be related to the patterns of power and resource distribution existing in pre-war society (Richards, 2005:1; Bøås and Dunn, 2007). Rebel group abusiveness towards civilian communities and community-combatant relations during the war has profound impacts on post war reintegration outcomes for youth ex-combatants (Refer Table 2 below).

Reno's (2007) analysis of rebel group abusiveness uses a dual model of rebel behaviour, with groups drawing on pre-war capital based patronage networks functioning as predatory in nature. Conversely leaders from communities which were marginal to dominant networks tend to organise armed groups that are protective of local communities. In case of protective rebel groups, recruitment from amongst ethnic peers, or by elders in particular communities results in the formation of groups similar to village defence militias, members of such groups may opt out of formal demobilization or return home on cessation of hostilities. Members of predatory groups which had a deliberate strategy of civilian targeting, ethnic cleansing or physical terror may find return to home communities more problematic. Protective armed groups control their fighters through shared membership in the social institutions of a particular ethnic or religious community and draw from among local and ethnically homogenous pools as was evidenced with recruitment into the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which was predominantly Krahn with sporadic Sarpo and Kru presence. Higher levels of civilian abuse was also likely in case of foreign mercenary presence for instance the Kamajor militia members from Sierra Leone who fought as part of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) during 2003 were reported to have used amputation tactics similar to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. This has important repercussions on post war social reintegration dynamics especially on how interaction between rebel groups and civilian communities receive and reconcile with returning combatants.

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[2] In this paper apart from secondary sources, I use empirical data collected during 2008-2009 as part of two phases of field work in seven counties of Liberia (Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Monrovia and Montserrado) to explore the linkages between reintegration outcomes and re-recruitment of ex-combatants and child soldiers. The data was collected using a qualitative survey instrument with 126 ex-combatants who took part in different phases of the civil conflict.

Table 2

	Conflict Years		Post Conflict Period
	Rebel Group and Community		Ex-Combatant and Community
Organizational Variables	Command Structure	Recruitment Experience	Volition/Coercion Opportunity vs. Motives [Committed/Floating Recruit]
	Recruitment Strategies	Recruitment Location	Near/Away from Home Community
	Resource Endowment	Impact of Combatant Role	Fear of Reprisal/Attack Fear of Identification for Misdeeds War Enemies/Fear of Political Persecution
		War-time In-Group Experience and Civilian abuse	Civilian Abuse as Group Strategy
	Group Objectives		Civilian Abuse as Individual Revenge
			Aberration/Trauma
Conflict Variables	Inter-Group Competition		Looting/Personal Profit
	Resource-Based		
	Regional Intervention/Actors	Resettlement Options	Home Community
	Global Politics		Urban-Rural Spatial Divide
			Job Migration
Socio-Political Variables	Ethnicity/Discrimination		New Community
	Ideology/Class Struggle		
	Identity/Religion	Social Reintegration Outcomes	Problems of Social Acceptance in Home Community
	Social Marginalization/ Political Exclusion		Problems of Social Acceptance in New Community
			No Problems
			Leadership Position in Community (Home/Away)

Some excerpts from interviews with ex-combatants in Liberia which has experienced a recent DDR process illustrate this better.

> …now now when I am here (Voinjama) I frustrate, there is no job, different different people label you as someone you are not…when someone see me, they say robber coming...but I not stealing anything.[3]

> I really did not have much problem with my family when I came back home, (Lofa) but really people had that negative thinking about we that took part in the war, so I come Gbarnga...[4]

Feelings of rejection resulted in ex-combatants leaving home communities in search for new sites in urban areas or in familiar social spaces populated by ex-combatant friends or former commanders. War time social networks offer continuity, protection and a community in itself. Economic needs of ex-combatants may be better fulfilled within ex-combatant communities such as rubber plantations like Sinoe, Guthrie, mining areas like Bartejan, Bong in Liberia or in quarter areas as was the case with former Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) fighters in Mozambique, or in Yei region of South Sudan (de Vries and Wiegink, 2011). This is due to the poor economic outlook and absorptive capacity of post war economies and limits to employment in the formal sector due to stigma, distrust and fear associated with soldiering. The security sector which can be the main employer for this caseload is often closed to them due to political factors or deliberate exclusion strategies. Command and control structures often survive in the post war period and create neo-patrimonial networks which provide jobs, social and

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[3] XCSL3, Voinjama, Lofa (22nd September, 2009).
[4] XCSB6, Bong Agro Farm, Gbarnga, Bong (6th October, 2009).

political support and physical security, access to public services, or legal access amidst the risks and instability associated with post conflict transitional societies. However, this is not a uniform trend. In Sierra Leone, survey data on ex-combatant reintegration suggests nearly 86 per cent of the demobilized caseload had severed ties with their former commanders (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007). In Afghanistan, by contrast, 70 per cent of community-based village militias retained ties with wartime networks, with 50 per cent still in contact with their former commanders despite demobilization (de Vries and Wiegink, 2011:44).

At the micro level, family reunification may not always be the primary motivation for ex-combatants, attitudes to return and resettlement in home communities vary depending on war time experiences and compulsions. The main reason family reunification may be problematic and there could be problems of rejection stems from the social distance created by separation during conflict. War creates routes for upward social mobility for different ethnic or social groups, and may result in power reversals among marginalized sections, for instance youth or women. Hence predominant themes for former combatants on return to communities are perceived loss of power and stigma. A former Small Boys Unit (SBU) (part of Charles Taylor's militia units) commander in Lofa and now an amputee also lamented,

> ...now to be very fair I feel bad sometimes when I see somebody doing me bad, being a former commander and you had people under your control and you now have no power, nothing, people look down at you that make me feel small.[5]

Another ex-combatant in Lofa shared that,

> At that time we felt holding the gun could protect you and make you look like one of them, with gun in your hand you have power, you talk to an older man even he get afraid, but now no power.[6]

This can also result in former combatants resisting civilian leadership or control, feeling superior or aggravated due to in-group socialization experiences rooted in high levels of physical violence. These impede a harmonious synergy between the needs of ex-combatants and civilian groups that CBR endeavours to meet. Communities apart from perceiving combatants as agents of violence, also expect them to bring back material goods, since looting may figure as a key feature of civilian war experiences. There is a perception among civilians that ex-combatants return home with some form of monetary benefit for their participation. These attitudes have been documented in Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi among other cases (Özerdem and Podder, 2008).

Prolonged involvement in an armed group may result in members losing contact with the family and sometimes such contact may result in their targeted killings. Another important factor is the ethnic or social pre-war capital networks which supported the formation or sustenance of a particular rebel group. This is consistent with the predation-protection dichotomy in rebel group behaviour alluded to above. For instance in Liberia, factional affiliation was important after the war and impacted reintegration outcomes. In homogeneous ethnic settlements of Mano, Gio, Krahn, Mandingo or Loma, it was difficult for youth who joined opposing factions to return or be accepted by the community. In Lofa, former LURD youth, who had been part of attacks on Loma villages and among SBU members with the GoL and Taylor militia elements, reintegration, has been complex, an outcome directly related to rebel group abusiveness during the war. I met several youth from Kolahun who had undergone DDR training at the YMCA in Monrovia, still scared of returning home. "I do plenty bad things that side, so I came to town."[7] One Loma youth who joined Taylor militia in 2003, did not take part in the DDR and chose to relocate to Kpakolokoyota, Bong where he works as a plumber. He admitted that "I was not going to live

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[5] XCSB6, Bong Agro Farm, Gbarnga, Bong (6th October, 2009).
[6] XCSN4, Flumpa, Saclapea, Nimba (8th October, 2009).
[7] Ibid, n.12.

in an area where I did what I needed to do, as a fighter one is compelled to do things in enemy zone or to capture a village."[8]

These difficulties exacerbate feelings of anger, desertion, and loss on part of family members. At a more personal level, former combatants also tend to remain secretive about their war time experiences, and may change their stories depending on the audience. Some find it difficult to partake in social interaction and events; this at times requires community level effort to engage them in community based groups, social clubs and similar structures in order to avoid remarginalisation (Moore, 2007: 196-197). Another strategy commonly used as part of NGO efforts to reunite ex-combatants and repair estranged ties is sensitization. Rooted in a communitarian vision of African society as being inherently forgiving and embracing, youth are reunited as long lost children, and asked to be re-admitted into social relationships under the rhetoric 'there is no bad bush to throw away a bad child' (Stovel, 2007). However stigma is a real issue for most. This is perhaps even more pertinent for girl soldiers. A former Taylor militia member and SBU commander in Voinjama suggested:

> Now that I am a civilian I am light now, I am nothing, people beat me, break my hand and before let someone look at me and break my hand I would treat him...I prefer being a general than a civilian, to be commanding people ... at times when I am in the street people will be telling me you are nothing you are like paper...the war is over. I don't know why they call me bad bad name...

Also a limited policy focus on merely including community members in the reintegration programme, jeopardizes the goals of reintegration both at the individual level, the healing of relationships between ex-combatants and their communities; and at the societal level, the transition to a peaceful society that favour reconstruction and development. Hence in some way, policy approaches need to leverage the reintegration-reconciliation continuum and explore the nuances of reconciliation at community level further.

Aid Strategy in DDR: Trends and Shifts

Aid practice today is a key strategic[9] tool in conflict resolution and social reconstruction (Duffield, 1999). A host of actors' including donor governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, regional bodies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private security companies, security, infrastructure, communications and logistics have gained contested presence in post conflict landscapes (Duffield, 2002: 1062). Aid flows to post conflict reconstruction have been mired by the complexities inherent in such environments, stemming from insecurity, weak governments, unresolved hostilities, and competition between different stakeholders. This has motivated donors to opt for context specific aid management architecture with a core country strategy (Schiavo-Campo, 2003: p. i). In most instances, aid commitments and donor assistance both from bilateral and multilateral sources have opted for project-based modality with reliance on NGOs or UN agencies for implementation (Foster and Leavy, 2001) and programme-based funding, by selecting particular sectors for intervention by each donor (Barakat, 2009: 108-109). With growing adoption of integrated DDR approaches, UN assessed budget funding widows are managed through a specific agency or unit to make DDR funding more linear and less dispersed. Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) mechanisms integral to UN inter-agency planning, coordination and resource mobilization seek to offer a coordinated arrangement for funding DDR activities as well (IDDRS, 2006:1-2).

In contexts of conflict related decimation, persistent insecurity and fragility, communities have proven to be resilient. Native populations are often first to return, prior to the entry of the regular humanitarian aid actors who seek to assist the return and resettlement process in real time crises response. Ranging a host of sectors from security (community-based policing), socio-economic recovery (education and health

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[8] XCSB7, Kpakolokoyota, Bong (15th September, 2009).

[9] The use of the word strategy in this paper is generic, it relates to political level strategies which define operational modality and hence shape funding priorities and flows.

infrastructure) to media, communication and civic education (community radio, and local dialogue through art, drama and visual entertainment) community based efforts in peacebuilding have been leveraged into prominence in recent years (Haider, 2009: 4-5). This growing policy interest in community-based approaches has filtered into DDR practice as well. The key themes are empowerment of local community groups and institutions by providing the community direct control over investment decisions, project planning, execution, and monitoring. This is complemented with an emphasis on participation, ownership and management (Haider, 2009). At a policy level, the UN Report to the Secretary General to the General Assembly on DDR (2006) elaborated on the shift towards a more community inclusive approach as well; the main objective is to mitigate community resentment towards ex-combatants as sole rewardee of reintegration benefits (Annan and Patel, 2009:10).

In terms of praxis, first generation DDR efforts during the 1980s and 1990s were more aligned with demilitarization programmes funded by bilateral partners who focused on decommissioning and reform of formal structures in less developed/transitional countries. They offered alternative employment schemes for retired officers and veteran pension schemes and hence were exclusive in focus as evident in Ethiopia, Eritrea, East Europe and Philippines. Second generation DDR programmes in Angola, Rwanda, Mozambique, expanded reintegration benefits to include educational and economic projects for a better transition to civilian livelihoods. Third generation DDR programmes in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi have sought to combine community recovery projects with ex-combatant focused training and education support. More recent programmes in Sudan and Nepal have attempted further refinement of the community reintegration elements (Halton, 2011; Binadi and Binadi, 2011).

In the DDR field, centralized mechanisms for funding include the UN assessed budget (delivered through UN peacekeeping missions) and multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) (Ball and Hendrickson, 2005). In 2007, 1.6 billion dollars were spent, and over one million former combatants participated, in formal DDR programs, 90 percent of them in Africa (ECP, 2008). Funding modality varies according to the international actors involved, when the World Bank takes lead, the norm is to pool donor contributions into Multi-Donor Trust fund (MDTF) as in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Edmonds et al, 2009: 29). In cases where the UN takes the lead role, multiple sources of donor funding may support a national DDR programme. These include the peacekeeping assessed budget; core funding from the budgets of UN agencies, voluntary contributions from donors to an UN-managed trust fund; bilateral support from UN member states; and contributions from the World Bank.

Aid strategies in DDR as in broader post conflict recovery efforts remain mired in the dichotomy between economic-political performances; namely an economic approach to conditionality makes aid contingent on economic performance and a political approach which makes it contingent on peacebuilding objectives. This is outside of political rivalry or competition for leadership among donor agencies/actors. Peace priorities vs. donor priorities are often mismatched. (Boyce, 2000: 370).[10] Actual donor pledges and subsequent performance in mobilizing, designing, conditioning, delivering and coordinating committed resources remain disparate in most instances (Forman and Patrick, 2000). Aid channelling and disbursement through NGOs can also pose problems. MDTF's though offering coordination possibilities also have drawbacks (See, Forman and Patrick, 2000: 4-5). Donor funding is also channelled as part of technical assistance to support agencies like UNDP to plan and implement a DDR process prior to peace provisions mandating the same, as was the case with DFID funding in Sudan (Ball and Hendrickson, 2005: 5). In Liberia, funding for the DDRR programme (2004-2009) was channelled through the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) mission budget, with voluntary contributions channelled through a multi-donor trust fund administered by UNDP (Ibid: 20). Involvement of multiple actors however may result in making the process non-transparent. What has been the donor experience with community based programming? Besides can CBR become the key link between reintegration and reconciliation efforts by strengthening the economic, social and political dimensions of the reintegration – reconciliation continuum? The next section looks closely at donor

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[10] See for case study specific analysis on Mozambique, Bosnia, Palestine and El Salvador.

approaches to community centred recovery efforts and cross-country experiences to reconcile ex-combatant and community needs within reintegration efforts.

Community in Post conflict Reconstruction and Donor Strategies

Within the relief-development spectrum local communities have been the unit for programming across a wide spectrum ranging from community driven, community based, community focused, community centred and community located interventions. Donor and international aid agencies have adopted a wide range of closely related community centred strategies as part of post conflict development assistance. USAID, World Bank, Department for International Development (DFID) among other actors offer slight variation in their approaches to community based programming in post conflict recovery. The World Bank has coined the CDD terminology 'as an approach that empowers local community groups, including local government, by giving direct control to the community over planning decisions and investment resources through a process that emphasises participatory planning and accountability' (World Bank, 2006:6). The emphasis is on community action in post conflict environments, with weak public institutions requiring active intervention to rebuild local institutions. USAID prefers to use the concept of "community-based development," which is more donor driven than community driven. This approach directly influences community decisions on problem identification, selection of priorities, and solutions within donor's funding priorities and mandates (World Bank, 2007:2; USAID, 2007:5). DFID has focused on a 'sustainable livelihoods' approach (Solesbury, 2003) within its broader support for community driven reconstruction efforts for instance in the DRC.[11] The emphasis has been on encouraging communities to identify priority needs, to establish services and key facilities for improved social service deliver.

In post conflict environments, these donor defined community-based prefixes may not however include ideal scenarios of inclusion, participation and ownership. Bartle (2007) offers an useful criteria for differentiating between community based (CB) and community located (CL) programmes within this overarching field of community focused programming. CB programmes rests on the criteria of primary ownership by the community, namely that such programmes are chosen, selected and or controlled by the community. As a result most external agency programming is community located, with community participation to a lesser degree/incidental to a broader project objective. Selection of beneficiary communities is often contingent on subjective factors of physical access rather than accurate sampling frames due to the paucity of accurate data on returnee populations in a highly volatile, displaced and decimated social set up. In CL mode, various activities have been pre-selected for a community to choose from, prior to assuming control over the activity, hence, there is both an element of active negotiation, and of externally directed learning (Bartle, 2007 cited in Asiedu, 2010:5-6).

Earliest examples of community based reintegration include UNDP's Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees (PRODERE) in Central America (1990-1995), the Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project (CARERE)/SEILA[12] in Cambodia (1996-2000) and the Tajikistan Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development Program (RRDP) (1999-2004). These initiatives combined labour-intensive public works to rehabilitate war-damaged infrastructure, with on-the-job vocational training, focusing on credit schemes for micro or small businesses, and capacity-building of community-based and civil society organizations (Body, 2005). Projects offered employment to both civilians and ex-combatants and were selected based on community priorities (Annan and Patel, 2009). More recently, in Sierra Leone USAID has undertaken large-scale community-focused youth reintegration (2000 to 2002), replicated later in Burundi, DRC, and Liberia. The Sierra Leone programme targeted both ex-combatants and other at-risk youth. Training in literacy, numeracy, life-skills, agriculture, and peace education, along with psychosocial and vocational counselling lasted between six to 12 months. In Liberia, the Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) project sponsored by USAID similarly targeted

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[11] In Eastern DRC, Tuungane, DFID works in partnership with the International Rescue Committee.
[12] Seila means 'foundation stone' in Khmer Sanskrit.

refugees, IDPs, and ex-combatants.[13] In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), similar projects sought to strengthen peace and improve security in the community by offering ex-combatants and war-affected youth technical skills training. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the community focused elements of ex-combatant reintegration were part of the formal DDR efforts. In partnership with UNDP, UNICEF, DFID and GTZ, the Liberia and Sierra Leone programmes introduced information dissemination, sensitization, road recovery, street cleaning, rehabilitation, shelter construction, education programmes, civic and peace education, music, sports groups, and other projects which while including a greater number of ex-combatants also benefited communities to help rebuild social capital. In Liberia, the UNDP support for the national DDR programme expanded its initial target group from ex-combatants to war-affected communities under the 'community based recovery' strategy which emphasised restoration of community level governance through district development committees.

The UNDP's ex-combatant reintegration and community support project in the Central African Republic (CAR) attempted to involve communities in an innovative approach (UNDP, 2004). Each combatant received a reintegration voucher to hand in at the local office for reintegration in the community into which they wanted to resettle. Each community was then allocated funds equivalent to the number of vouchers collected (UNDP, 2004:17). In Congo Brazzaville, UNDP and IOM launched a DDR programme (2000-2002), and later linked it with the Community Action for Post-Conflict Recovery project. Under its auspices, communities selected projects for funding and infrastructure recovery, while ex-combatants participated in labor intensive work towards that objective (Haden and Faltas, 2004:20). The Ituri DDR program in the DRC provided short-term micro-finance for ex-combatants and medium-term socio-economic activities (up to USD 30,000) for communities that required participation of 70 percent ex-combatants and 30 percent other community members (Annan and Patel, 2009: 10).

Elements of CBR have also been invoked to varying degrees as part of recovery efforts in Cambodia, Chad, Côte d' Ivoire, Philippines, Guinea Bissau, and Indonesia (Caramés, 2009). In Cambodia, the World Bank headed the demobilisation of 30,000 members of the Armed Forces, in conjunction with the national Armed Forces Demobilisation Council. This three year programme (October 2001 – December 2004) had a budget of 42 million dollars of which 57 percent was allocated to reintegration activities. Reintegration support included provision of social and economic services for families and communities. In Chad efforts to restructure the Armed Forces was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Cooperation National Rehabilitation Committee during 2005-2010. The programme received five million dollars from the World Bank to undertake streamlining of the national forces. In a novel approach, micro units of specialists were deployed as teams who took charge of roughly 50 ex-combatants and interacted with the community in guiding the design and execution of labour projects which could aid in social and economic infrastructural rehabilitation (Caramés, 2009).

In Mindanao, Philippines, 25,000 MNLF rebels and their families were reintegrated under the Mindanao Council for Economic Development programme which commenced in 1996 following a peace accord (Muggah, 2005, Caramés, 2009). According to one estimate roughly 170 million dollars has been disbursed as aid to former combatants and their communities in MNLF controlled areas of Mindanao between 1997 and 2005. The main donors have been the World Bank which has committed 33 million USD through the Mindanao Rural Development Program (MRDP), USAID, UNDP and JICA are other prominent actors (ECP, 2008). In West Africa, Cote d' Ivoire has undergone a recent programme for the demobilization of 48,500 members of various organizations, paramilitary militias, the armed forces and armed opposition groups who took part during the recent civil conflict. The programme was led by a NCDDR, with a budget of 150 million dollars with 26 million allocated for community rehabilitation (18 percent). Similar to the Liberian programme the final phase incorporated community rehabilitation (CR) under UNDP leadership. Focus was on infrastructural rehabilitation and community recovery. In Guinea-Bissau, reduction of the Armed Forces of 12,600 soldiers resulted in the conduct of a DDR programme

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[13] Interview with Varney Gaie, Margibi, Montserrado and Bong Programme Manager, Mercy Corps, Kakata, Margibi, (16th September, 2009). Mercy Corps has been a core USAID NGO partner in implementation of YES in these counties.

coordinated by the Demobilisation, Transition and Reintegration Programme (PDDRI) during 2001-2005. With a budget of 13 million dollars, the emphasis was on reintegration individual ex-combatants within their communities, in a synchronized programme of recovery focusing on resource rehabilitation, poverty alleviation which was structured through a pooled fund mechanism. An important feature was the creation of Regional Reintegration Councils with representatives from civil society and local community's inorder to encourage civilian participation in decision-making as part of the reintegration process.

In Haiti, efforts for reintegration and compensation of ex-members of the Haitian armed forces ran concomitantly with demobilisation of urban gangs and their subsequent reinsertion into DDR-related programmes. Community based organizations in the form of Committees for the Prevention of Violence and Development (CPVD) were set up, comprising of community elected representatives drawn from different age and gender groups. In Indonesia, reduction of GAM forces undertaken by the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) had an estimated budget of 15 million dollars, funded by the European Commission and Sweden. The programme lasted nine months (September 2005-June 2006) and was executed through the Kecamatan Development Programme (KDP). The short term goals were on rehabilitation while long term objectives were on holistic reintegration and securing a peace dividend and economic multiplier effect through cash payments to ex-combatants who returned to communities of origin, using 1.8 million USD funding from the World Bank, EU and the US. World Bank which was the lead donor focussed on community level poverty reduction, the programme was executed through a network of 15,000 local facilitators in order to ensure community participation (Caramés, 2009).

Similarly, the Timor Leste reintegration effort under UNDP auspices was called the Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-combatants (RESPECT) (Peake, 2008: 15-17). The programme was designed to support vulnerable groups including ex-combatants, widows, and unemployed youth groups inorder to capacitate them with livelihood skills and better employment prospects. Community input in selecting beneficiaries, an the design, planning, and implementation of micro-project activities was reported as successful (Peake, 2008: 15-16). In Colombia, under the 2002 Ralito peace agreement, conducive spaces for reconciliation between population affected by violence and ex-combatants were an innovative approach attempted as part of the reintegration of ex-combatants and paramilitaries into civilian life[14] (DNP, 2008: 8). Drawing from these experiences, what lessons can be filtered? Can we today advocate a decoupling of the DD and RR stages, by relegating reintegration in the domain of long term development efforts and including reinsertion as time bound and technical component part of disarmament and demobilization stages leveraging security and political objectives?

Conclusions

Despite these attempts at striking a fine balance between community and individual ex-combatant needs in community recovery, donor efforts remain unclear at best. Amidst significant gaps on outcomes and impact of DDR programmes, and given the complexity and variance flowing from contextual differences, evaluation of DDR remains at a nascent stage. My conclusions from field experience in Liberia is that that DDR programmes do not attract all authentic combatants and often cheating or duplicity is involved due to economic benefits on offer. Community based reintegration though novel may be better suited for rank and file combatants, however to break down command and control structures and co-opt high ranking officers in rebel groups requires, political mainstreaming and power-sharing to offer them a significant stake in the political economy of peace. Besides, it remains rather confounding as to what reintegration means in contexts where practically everybody fought? Is it possible to decouple needs of

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[14] Uribe's administration has developed a demobilization programme to encourage people from the guerrilla groups to abandon illegal armed forces and to enter into civilian life. Between 2002-September 2009, 8,567 combatants with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) have individually demobilized (see Caramés, 2009).

different groups? In post conflict societies marked by high unemployment, large scale death, displacement, little functioning infrastructure and institutions and significant recent urbanization, resettlement of ex-combatants, displaced and civilian returnee's takes place simultaneously. By designing programmes which seek to cater to multiple needs through gradual phasing down or broadening the scope of activities may result in neglect of particular needs of each sub-group at different time periods. For instance exposure to extreme violence and physical torture may be part and parcel of soldiering experience for ex-combatants which may not be the case for displaced or refugee civilians. While the post war economic outcomes of civilians who fled to neighbouring countries is difficult particularly in light of infrastructural destruction and restarting life in their home community, it may be better off than ex-combatants who joined as children, lost out on education, family care and regular inter-personal contacts.

Inverting reintegration outcomes, the merit of CBR approaches become apparent, i.e., without support from family and community most ex-combatants especially girls and children tend to return to an insecure life in the city, on the streets. Given that these focal agents are incapacitated and in need of financial assistance, it is important that they figure in the targeting and design of reintegration/reconciliation programmes. Yet, reconciliation and reintegration are processes that defy quantification or amenability to scientific measurement (Muggah, 2009). With increasing pressure on donors to justify aid flows, it appears reintegration efforts may offer fewer tangible or numeric outputs when disbursed at a wider community level (Baines, 2010: 410).

It is important to recognise that there are limitations to what can be the scope of DDR programmes, and some dimensions are perhaps best left to other initiatives. While bringing ex-combatants on par with the rest of the community may no longer be the appropriate objective, DDR needs when linked to programmes aimed at community development and reconciliation between communities and ex-combatants may result in dilution of objectives (Haden and Faltas, 2004; USAID, 2005: 5-8; Pouligny, 2004:17; Koyoma, 2005:75; Swarbick, 2007: 51-52). Moreover, the merits of a community based reintegration strategy are interspersed with important drawbacks. In place of greater local participation and inclusion, CBR approaches may result in reinforcing pre-existing cultural or social divisions, e.g., the dominance of a particular ethnic group, class, social group or gender. There also remains an inherent risk of elite capture due to reliance of external actors on elites to provide access and leadership on account of better literacy, numeracy skills and ability to mobilize local support for new projects. In line with this dependency, community led targeting can also result in lop sided disbursement of aid and even encourage cases of personal aggrandisement or corruption. Besides, problems with targeting such as partiality and selection bias which may not be resolved by community led decisions (Richards, Bah and Vincent, 2004). Concerns about the community reintegration approach include the potential for individual ex-combatants to feel inadequately supported and the possibility of ex-combatants returning to violence. Critiques of the Colombian reintegration process concern the authoritative role that ex-combatants continue to play in their communities. Theidon (2005) claims that demobilized paramilitaries are transforming their military power into economic power which is evident in their power assertion in urban spaces. Community approaches could even run the risk of sheltering individual abuses and human rights violations at a local level (Annan and Patel, 2009).

Ex-combatant preference for urban reintegration can also pose operational challenges for community based approaches, which are typically more sustainable and effective when focused on rural areas and in cases where ex-combatants return to their former communities. Case studies from Liberia, the Balkans and Central America testify to the difficulty of locating and monitoring urban based ex-combatants and designing community-based approaches when ex-combatant lack a history of living in the community of return and or where divisions within the community are profound (CICS, 2008).

Besides in targeting the community instead of a specific focus on ex-combatant caseloads may result in "differentiation within these broad categories – reflecting a tendency to regard all ex-combatants as vulnerable and to treat 'communities' as homogeneous entities" (CICS, 2008: 22). There may still be need for providing preferential treatment to ex-combatants due to their war time experiences from a development oriented rather than a securitized perspective. This is more the case with child soldiers,

female soldiers and disabled/war wounded to ensure new capacities and opportunities for education, socialization and participation in community decision-making (Willems, 2008: 39; USAID, 2005: 21-22).

In Liberia for instance, the USAID-DFID partnership for the Liberian Community Infrastructure Programme (LCIP) in its first phase (2004-2006) focused on involving ex-combatants and war-affected populations in public works reconstruction. This effort to integrate community based and psychosocial counseling approaches as part of infrastructure rehabilitation resulted in partially completed projects, due to lack of local community support for them. The result was a shift in Phase II to a more needs' based skilled delivery of infrastructure construction (USAID, 2008: 4). Hence possibility of confusion over objectives needs to be highlighted in planning and programme design. Collusion of beneficiary caseloads may dilute the purpose of programming, which can be the greatest drawback, compounded by complexity and ambition of donor intervention. This may result in confusion over benchmarks, create overlaps in the results framework, defeat donor criteria for aid effectiveness and delink programmes from the local social history of conflicts and reconciliation challenges. War time relationships bear on post war reintegration trajectories at the individual and community level and hence without adequate attention to the reintegration-reconciliation continuum, efficient community based rehabilitation and recovery may remain limited in purpose and achievements.

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