Helpdesk Research Report: Reintegration in Aceh/post-conflict environments
Date: 30/01/09

Query: Please identify literature (including information/documentation) on the reintegration of former combatants in basic services – particularly education and livelihood programmes – in post-2005 Aceh and/or in other post-conflict environments.

Enquirer: AusAID

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1. Overview

The situation in Aceh differs from other conflict environments in that most combatants have remained close to their communities during the conflict, with some never having left their villages. As such, minimal tensions are reported between former combatants and ‘receiving communities’. Reintegration measures have thus focused more on economic reintegration instead of social reintegration. Although the education levels of ex-combatants and ex-prisoners are generally low, a needs assessment conducted by the World Bank (2006) found that there was little interest in formal education among former combatants, particularly those over the age of 25. Overall, the primary need identified was livelihoods assistance, comprising of training, access to capital and job creation.

Reintegration in education and livelihood services in Aceh has centred upon alternative education in the form of vocational skills training and small business development. Information Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS) have been established to provide information to former combatants on accessing health services, small business opportunities, training courses and searching for job opportunities. These have been very useful as health referrals have contributed not only medical care but also to rebuilding trust in government services. The training and small business programmes established in Aceh are essential services, given the difficulties that former combatants have in accessing jobs and adopting civilian livelihoods. These have been critiqued, however, for paying insufficient attention to apprenticeships, mentoring and on-the-job training (often deemed more effective than standard vocational training) and to the development of ‘life-skills’ (e.g. communication, conflict mediation, civic education). In addition, training programmes must match the education levels of former combatants, who may have greater difficulties with reading and writing. In some cases, training modules in Aceh were considered too advanced and technical. Training programmes have also suffered from a failure to link them to longer term
support mechanisms (e.g. local training institutes) or to base them on thorough market analysis. In the absence of a proper market assessment - which establishes employer needs and market demand - as well as efforts to foster job creation and access to capital, the participants of training programmes are often frustrated by the lack of outlets for their newly learned skills.

In many ways, the issues identified in Aceh are similar to those in other post-conflict environments. The general literature on reintegration elaborates on these and provides additional recommendations:

- Reintegration programmes must be designed holistically, recognising the inter-relationship of social, economic and psycho-social aspects. For example, providing training and employment facilitates not only an income, but can also foster a sense of pride and purpose among former combatants and reconfigure their role and identity in a civilian setting.
- It is important to assess and draw on the existing skills of former combatants. Skills such as infrastructure construction, loyalty, discipline and teamwork are often common among them and can be transferred into a civilian role.
- Skills training must also include knowledge of market structures, capital structures and accounting information. In addition, teaching life skills and assisting in acculturation to civilian life and addressing psycho-social needs should also form part of training programmes.
- Government and community consultation in the planning and implementation of donor programmes is essential. This leads to more targeted programmes and greater community ownership.
- It is useful to test-pilot training programmes before they are implemented on a larger scale in order to ensure that they are well designed and implemented.

**Children** constitute a special category of former combatants. It is often necessary to redefine education options (content and methods) in order to meet their needs. Former child combatants fall far behind their peers in education. Many find it embarrassing to attend classes with children much younger than them, and drop out as a result. This is particularly detrimental because, in addition to learning, schools provide a routine, as well as an environment for psycho-social healing, where child soldiers can redefine themselves and their social relationships. In response, accelerated learning programmes (also known as ‘catch-up classes’) have been established in many post-conflict countries. These alternative education systems condense the time it takes to complete basic education in regular school systems. They are aimed at not only former combatants but other war-affected children who have fallen behind in their education. Many such educational programmes weave ‘special content’ issues – e.g. HIV/AIDS, land mines, conflict resolution, peace and civic education into their curriculum. In order to address the need for children coming from poor families to contribute to their family income, many of these learning programmes are paired with vocational training.

**Women** are considered another special category. Female ex-combatants are often excluded from training and education services. In order to facilitate their participation, child care facilities are essential as well as operating courses closer to where they reside. **Disabled ex-combatants** are also excluded from such services; their needs, however, are often very similar to other combatants. As such, instead of being viewed as a separate group, efforts should be made to ensure that training and education courses are physically accessible and cater to those with visual or hearing impairments.

**Community-based reintegration** is also an important consideration in programming. Much of the literature stresses the significance of including all war-affected communities as potential beneficiaries of education, training and livelihood services. Not only would widening the focus address important needs, it would also prevent social tensions from developing over perceived preferential treatment towards former combatants and feelings of inequity and
injustice on the part of non-combatants in post-conflict societies. This, in turn, would contribute to the social reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as reconciliation. As such, much of the literature urges that attention should also be paid to the provision of public goods (e.g. education and health services) and community development projects in ‘receiving communities’.

2. Reintegration in Aceh

The World Bank


The Government of Indonesia requested the World Bank to conduct this assessment to determine the most pressing needs of members of the Aceh Free Movement (GAM) in their reintegration. Section 3 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) outlines measures for aiding the reintegration of former GAM combatants and political prisoners into Acehnese villages and society, including ‘economic facilitation’, the ‘rehabilitation of public and private property destroyed or damaged in the conflict’, and the ‘allocation of farming land, employment or social security’ for former combatants, prisoners and affected civilians.

The assessment found that the greatest priority for active GAM members, political prisoners and vulnerable conflict-affected community members is livelihoods assistance (capital, training, private sector development and job creation), followed by housing programs. It notes that “formal education is not a high priority for most GAM returnees, although younger GAM members (aged 25 or less) were proportionally more interested. Returnees prefer receiving part-time education or practical skills training, and are particularly keen when they can work at the same time. Women returnees were more interested in pursuing further education. Most active GAM who are interested in skills training would like courses that can help them become traders (70%). This is unsurprising given that most of those wanting to change occupations want to become traders” (p. xi). The report recommends that training and education programs be focused on the skills needed to allow returnees and other population groups to access jobs and to succeed in them. The report also identifies health care as a pressing need.

As there is little tension between former combatants and communities, ‘reintegration’ in Aceh is focused less on social repair and more on assisting ex-combatants with the transition from a military to civilian life. The assessment found that both GAM and receiving communities believed that ordinary citizens who were affected by the conflict should also receive benefits. As such, attention should be paid to the provision of public goods to communities as a whole, particularly the provision of education and health services.

See also:


International Organisation for Migration (IOM)


This study seeks to map out vulnerabilities and post-conflict programming in Aceh; and provides recommendations for interventions to address these vulnerabilities and enhance human security. It stresses that decent jobs and livelihoods are crucial for the reintegration of ex-combatants and ex-political prisoners. It notes that following the Helsinki agreement, most ex-combatants and prisoners returned to the same types of livelihood activities they held prior to August 2005 (agricultural or trading); however, access to and ownership of land and livestock is problematic. Few ex-combatants and prisoners, and their families, have regained economic independence through finding jobs or establishing sustainable livelihoods. In addition, the study notes that levels of education among ex-combatants and prisoners are generally low.

The study stresses the importance of Information Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS) that provide information on accessing public services, such as health services, and tailor business opportunities to individual ex-combatants and prisoners. The IOM’s ICRS program has been successful in providing referrals to formal health services and assistance for small business: it “provided technical assistance, beneficiary training such as business planning, and a tranche payment system (thus ensuring that funds were used to develop new or existing small businesses). Each client was provided direct assistance in the form of equipment, training, and other in-kind inputs … Skills development included small business training for 76.6% of all GAM/TNA ex-combatants and ex-political prisoners, as well as animal husbandry training provided to 12.3% of clients. Other types of training delivered to IOM clients included small business development and farming (agricultural) skills” (pp.15-16).

The study identifies some shortfalls: “ICRS training focused narrowly on small business development and, therefore, fell short of building skills needed for ensuring a successful transition to nonviolent livelihoods in a manner that would build social cohesion. For example, apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs promote life-skills development, personal networking. Nor is data available on the establishment of peer support programs that could have helped clients to build upon opportunities without resorting to violence (e.g. mentoring provided by older ex-combatants to younger ex-combatants on how to reintegrate and move forward with their lives successfully). Nor did the ICRS conduct research or analysis on local training institutes that could take-up future training activities for ex-combatants and ex-political prisoners, or establish a job networking system with local government partners, both of which would have created greater levels of sustainability for fulfilling the project’s objectives by building upon local capacities. Additionally, small but important techniques, such as providing skills training certifications, did not appear to be factored into project planning or implementation. These sorts of tools and techniques could have helped ICRS clients find future jobs, thus promoting sustainable livelihood recovery as well as facilitating social reintegration” (p. 16).

The study recommends that reintegration programs attempt to facilitate more permanent follow-up support systems, through government and private business development services, and skills training providers. It also recommends that the Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA) work with the IOM’s new ICRS program for vulnerable and unemployed youth and develop a scaled up version for 2009 – focusing on providing realistic job opportunities. In addition, it
suggests that the BRA should do a mapping of Aceh-wide skills training, jobs and micro-enterprise referral database that can assist ex-combatants and vulnerable youth.

See also:


Bonn International Centre for Conversion

Beeck, C., 2007, 'Re-Paving the Road to Peace: Analysis of the implementation of DD&R in Aceh Province, Indonesia', Brief, no. 35, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, Bonn

This report provides an overview of government and donor programs in Aceh aimed at ‘reintegration’. It finds that the Indonesian government has interpreted ‘reintegration’ to mean ‘reinsertion’ (the distribution of ‘economic facilitation packages’). The donor community (e.g. IOM, World Bank and GTZ), instead, have adopted a broader, long-term approach that goes beyond one-off cash payments and includes social, economic and political reintegration and access to social, economic and health services. The report stresses that training programs must be embedded in longer term mechanisms in order to classify as ‘reintegration’ assistance.

The IOM’s reintegration program has centred on Information, Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS), through which ex-combatants and prisoners have received referrals from health staff based in ICRS offices and medical treatment. This has been important not only in medical terms, but also for rebuilding trust in government structures and services. The IOM has also delivered ‘quick-impact community projects’ that benefit both GAM returnees and conflict-affected communities.

GTZ followed the findings of the World Bank Needs Assessment (2006) in providing appropriate training projects based on the needs of former GAM members and other conflict-affected individuals: “By providing non-formal training which lasted up to three months, the GTZ training is specifically designed to meet the educational profile of the target group, as training usually focused on one particular vocational skill, such as masonry, bakery or metalworking. The training itself is being provided by local universities, school and/or technical schools. [...] At the request of the donor, 70 percent of the participants had to be GAM returnees and approximately 20 percent had to be women” (p. 38). Beginning in mid-2006, GTZ began providing two-to-four week training courses. A range of courses were offered and men and women were able to choose freely which skills they wanted to learn or to improve (see tables 5 and 6 on pp. 39-40). Some difficulties that emerged included unsatisfied expectations that the completion of a course would automatically result in access to a job; and insufficiently tailored course materials: “as a lot of former combatants had been living in the jungle for a considerable number of years, many encountered difficulties with reading and writing. The training modules used were often found to be too advanced, as they were written in a very technical language which not all participants were able to understand” (p. 41). Subsequent courses corrected for these shortfalls by modifying the course materials and managing expectations while also trying to improve integration into the job market.
This report discusses the difficulties that persist in Aceh, including issues of 'reintegration'. It notes that traditional notions of 'reintegration' do not apply in the context of Aceh. Whereby rebel fighters in other conflict situations often live for extended periods in military camps away from their communities, insurgents in Aceh remained close to local communities and some never left their home villages. Reintegration in post-conflict Aceh has thus focused on economic reintegration instead of social reintegration. Attention has been paid to providing assistance to ex-prisoners, ex-combatants and 'victims of the conflict' in the form of jobs or land, and social security (cash payments) for those who could not work. While the prisoner category has been straightforward, there have been various problems with defining 'ex-combatants', and the real number identified is much higher than that cited in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). This has lead to the dilution of fund disbursements. Other problems include the lack of a monitoring system for the allocation of funds. The Aceh Reintegration Board (BRA), established by the government in 2006, decided to fund livelihood projects, based on submitted proposals. The BRA has failed, however to review how the money has actually been spent. In addition, former women guerrillas have been neglected in this program. Other programs, for example one run by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), with funds from Japan, have focused on including women in their in-kind assistance programs. In addition, a joint CIDA, UNDP and USAID project aims to focus on 'unemployed youth'.

International Labour Office


This document provides useful discussion on reintegration that can be applicable not only in the context of Aceh, but other post-conflict environments. The author notes that ex-combatants tend to be at a disadvantage in the competition for scarce jobs as many of them have not acquired skills that are considered useful for work in civilian life. She states, however, that there are skills that ex-combatants may have picked up during their military life that are of use and that these should be recognised, e.g. reconstructing infrastructure, strong discipline, loyalty and team work. Still, skills training is essential and is often provided with limited resources: “In this context, it is crucial to improve the quantity and quality of training, namely through training of trainers’ courses and supply of training materials (equipment, tools, manuals). A real opportunity may involve using the traditional but informal system of training through apprenticeship. The types of courses provided have to respond to the local market and should take into account the specific features of the local context in terms of availability of raw materials, access to markets, purchasing capacity of communities and appropriate technology. Overall, educational and skills profiling should be based on the individual's specific situation and context. Training providers have to be creative in offering new skills that are not on the market yet, as for these young and inexperienced job seekers competition will be extremely tough” (p.18).

The document also covers reintegration of special groups, including combatants with disabilities and children. It notes that those with disabilities are often segregated from
programs for able-bodied ex-combatants; however, their social and economic needs are still similar. As such, they should be given equal access to opportunities for education, vocational training, employment assistance and entrepreneurship. It also stresses that children and youth (both ex-combatants and those in conflict-affected communities) who have missed out on education should have access to accelerated learning programs (‘catch-up’ programs) that are compatible with the regular system of education; and that these programs could run along side vocational training and apprenticeship programs.

The document provides detailed guidelines for economic reintegration strategies and programs, including discussion on increasing absorption in the informal and formal economy; preparing vocational training; local economic development in receiving communities and community-driven initiatives; employment services and referral services (covering job opportunities, training courses, lists of relevant organisations and programs dealing with employment and livelihoods and psychosocial support services etc.); business development services and micro-finance.

3. Reintegration in other post-conflict environments

General

Nilsson, A., 2005, ‘Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Post-Conflict Societies’, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University

This paper provides guidance on reintegration, including economic reintegration – focusing on employment, education and training. It notes that most demobilised combatants lack sufficient education and skills to compete in the labour market. As such, assistance must be given to those who wish to complete primary or secondary education, and in some cases, higher education. The author stresses, however, that any formal education must be preceded by a market study, which examines how such education can contribute to employment. The paper notes that it is often more effective to provide practical, hands-on training instead of formal education. In addition, practitioners are increasingly arguing that apprenticeships and on-the-job training are preferable to vocational training programs. The paper stresses that regardless of whether training is achieved through vocational programs or apprenticeships, it must be based on proper labour market studies and be demand driven. The paper also stresses that in addition to skills training and education, former combatants also need assistance with accessing information on employment and job-seeking; as well as access to credit schemes to start new businesses and/or take advantage of other business opportunities.


This paper stresses the importance of providing immediate jobs for demobilised rebels and soldiers and for thinking about reintegration in a holistic manner. It critiques the literature on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and reintegration programs for treating social, political, economic and psychological reintegration is distinct. Donors often divide up the responsibilities and work autonomously, with minimal coordination. These various aspects of reintegration, however, are interlinked and interdependent and should be dealt with in a coherent and coordinated manner. The paper argues that the creation of employment is key to this: jobs provide not only a source of income, but a sense of pride and purpose to the ex-combatant. Employment also reduces the need to provide pensions and reinsertion payments, which can create social tensions when offered only to ex-combatants. Ex-
combatants, who are often young, strong men - can contribute greatly to the tremendous reconstruction challenges in post-conflict societies and the paper argues that employment should be created for them in these sectors. Rebuilding infrastructure, such as heath centres and access roads to markets, benefits society as a whole and can help to reframe the role of ex-combatants in the eyes of the community. Ex-combatants can also pick up new skills through ‘on-the-job training’.


This manual continues to provide useful lessons for reintegration programming. It offers detailed advice on organising training interventions. It highlights the need for a test-pilot project for training and employment creation prior to launching a large-scale training program in order to ensure that the program is properly designed and implemented. It discusses the varying duration of different programs based on existing skills and education of former combatants and the particular training being provided. It also states that former combatants in some contexts prefer to receive professional assistance from fellow ex-combatants – to whom they can confide their psycho-social and economic needs and receive sympathy and solidarity.

The manual also provides guidance concerning special groups. Regarding child soldiers, the manual notes that former child combatants are often embarrassed and frustrated to continue their education well behind their peers, which has resulted in high drop out rates. As such, special schools for child soldiers have been created in some situations. In addition to the provision of formal education, vocational training is considered as important for children and youth to upgrade professional skills and develop a sense of identity not linked to their previous roles in the military. The manual also provides advice regarding the needs of disabled ex-combatants. In order for disabled trainees to take part in mainstream training courses, which they have traditionally been excluded from, training facilities must be wheelchair accessible and the content of training must be accessible to those with seeing or hearing impairments.


This guidebook provides a comprehensive overview of all aspects of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. It considers improving access to work and employment as a central element of reintegration programs. It provides the following guidance on special training courses for ex-combatants (see pp. 82-83):

*Designing special courses for ex-combatants offers several advantages:

- Courses focus on the level and background of the target groups.
- Training courses develop existing skills and qualifications of ex-combatants.
- Training courses should be market-oriented to enable ex-combatants to find employment or to start their own small businesses.
- In short-term skills training programs, ex-combatants familiarise themselves with the demands of work outside the armed forces.
- Courses can be organised as part of DDR. This should also involve private training institutions. The capacities of the vocational training system are not necessarily affected.
- Short courses outside the formal qualification system can be offered on a decentralised basis at the regional level.
- Training courses linked to grants or small credits can help bridge the gap to self-employment (business skills, accounting and marketing).
Training courses are important for future employment opportunities, as most ex-combatants have no employment record outside the armed forces.

Courses for ex-combatants should address the requirements of the informal sector. Most ex-combatants have no chance of finding employment in the small formal sector. There is, therefore, the danger that ex-combatants will be marginalised. Skills alone are not sufficient to start a small business; a basic knowledge of market structures and accounting is needed as well, as ex-combatants have generally lived outside a market economy for years. Training courses are required to make ex-combatants qualify for grants and credit programs. To ensure that training is actually in line with market requirements, it is vital to estimate needs in advance for both the formal and the informal sector. If ex-combatants are trained in skills for which there is no demand, long-term unemployment and growing frustration will be the result. Before the start of any training program, a detailed needs assessment should be conducted. If training courses reflect the demands of public and private employers, ex-combatants have a better chance of finding employment. […]

Training is not only a matter of professional qualification. The social effects of training courses are often underestimated and are hard to measure. For many ex-combatants, the training courses offered as part of a reintegration program are their first chance to receive some sort of professional training. The experience of learning and applying this new skill can in itself be a positive effect. The completion of a training course also elevates participants’ social status. By the time the training courses are over, the individual excombatant might have established more contacts and have a clearer idea of what he/she can do for a living”.

http://www.unevoc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/bulletin/Forum13_e.pdf

This brief bulletin looks at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs to facilitate reintegration. It stresses that in order to be successful, training and support programs must focus not only on vocational skills but also the skills necessary for civilian life. Programs must pay sufficient attention to the process of acculturation and psycho-social needs.


Traditional reintegration programming focuses on ex-combatants. This document discusses the alternative ‘community-focused reintegration’ (CFR) approach, which acknowledges the “greater breadth of vulnerable, war-affected population segments in need of such training, while seeking to promote reintegration by creating a safe environment in which elements of divided communities could interact” (p. 5). CRF programs have also provided spaces for dialogue; provided basic health and education training; and sought to develop practical skills in leadership, communication and conflict resolution. The training programs are typically followed by small grants for community projects. Short-term evaluations of CRF programs in Burundi, the DRC and Liberia have demonstrated positive effects: there have been changes in community interactions and greater civic activism. The document stresses that these programs can provide a platform for a broad range of other development interventions.

The Afghan Interim Authority (AIA), 2006, ‘Security, Demobilization and Reintegration Framework and Future Program’, The Afghan Interim Authority
http://unddr.org/docs/Copy%20of%20AfghanInterimAuthority_SecurityDemobilizationReint%85.pdf
This document outlines the Afghan Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (ADRP). A key component is the Information, Registration and Referral Services (IRRS), designed to help former combatants to enhance their adaptive capacities through education and economic opportunities. The IRRS will provide referrals to short term employment projects (e.g. labour-intensive reconstruction projects that provide a salary and contribute to social reintegration); longer-term employment opportunities; training and education; and specialised organisations assisting small enterprise start-ups. In addition, referrals to health screening and other services are also to be provided. Special attention is to be given to vulnerable groups (e.g. ex-combatants with disabilities, child soldiers, HIV/AIDS patients, and traumatised ex-combatants). The Child Soldier component of the ADRP aims to provide targeted education, vocational training, and the development of sustainable enterprise opportunities to young people to develop their capacities and achieve long-term sustainable livelihoods. In order to foster social reintegration, attention will be paid to organising young people into local clubs that will support participatory group income generation and participation in community services.

Children

The following two papers stress the importance of education for demobilised children. The first provides an overview of the issues and the second outlines specific aspects of programming.

http://www.equip123.net/docs/E1-DemobChildSoldiers-IP1.pdf

This paper discusses the various facets of education for demobilised child soldiers:

- “Education and Psycho-Social Care – The need for psycho-social care for returning child soldiers is indeed tremendous. Education spaces and teachers are valuable in providing psycho-social care to children. Their role in establishing routine, giving space for children to safely socialize, and promoting self-esteem and resiliency is well recognised.
- Education and Special Content – There is an urgent need to giving conflict-affected children life-saving and skill-related information. Such concepts and skill-building activities can be easily integrated into education programs. Some of the critical information needs identified are on issues of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, land mines, conflict resolution and peace, as well as health and nutrition.
- Education and Livelihood – Education, especially literacy, is a necessary base for vocational training. For child soldiers, the need to develop livelihood security is very real and the opportunities for more profitable livelihood activities increase with an education.
- Education and Legitimate Reintegration - Integration of child soldiers in learning spaces gives social acceptance to their reintegration process in the community. It prepares them for a civilian life, and is a developmentally appropriate way of reintroducing them to the community and peaceful living.
- Education, Children’s Identity and Peer Relationships- Education and the associated learning process give children an alternative life style. It provides a daily routine that prevents them from slipping back into being a child soldier or other socially harmful activity. It also enables them to discover their other strengths – redefining themselves and their social relationships. This is a critical contribution toward the reintegration process” (paper no. 1, pp. 5-6).

The paper also discusses challenges in educating former child soldiers. These include:
Logistical issues: a damaged education system and destroyed infrastructure, which is a problem for all war-affected youth;

Adjustment issues: child soldiers often suffer from physical and psychological trauma. They have been out of a learning space for some time, and may have face difficulties concentrating on learning tasks, following norms, building relationships or keep up their interest and motivation;

Economic issues: many families of former child soldiers cannot support the children, who are then forced to work during school hours to contribute to the family income. In addition, school fees and uniform expenses are often prohibitive.

http://www.equip123.net/docs/E1-DemobChildSoldiers-IP2.pdf

Child soldiers are left far behind their peers in education. The papers argue that in order to reach them with educational interventions, they must be specifically targeted. Inter-related activities (e.g. provision of shelter, health screening and medical care, psycho-social care, education and economic support) are key to doing so. In addition, specific educational programs are recommended to deal with the special needs of child soldiers. They include:

- Accelerated Learning Programs: these are alternative programs that allow children to catch up to their peers. They also provide for learning of other life skills, values and attitudes. Such programs also exist for other war affected children.
- Special Content: these modules or lessons cover themes that are useful to child soldiers and are often included into education programs. They include peace education, education on landmine and HIV awareness, and civic education.
- Psycho-Social Care: this can take the form of ‘healing classrooms’, where teachers are trained to create nurturing environments that promote a sense of belonging in all children, build routines and relationships with peers and promote personal attachments. In discussing emotions trauma, facilitators often use art and music as forms of expression, individual counselling and therapeutic workshops.
- Vocational Education: often child soldiers come from extremely poor families and face pressure to supplement the family income. As such, many require skills training in a specific trade.

The paper notes that there is a great need for redefining educational options for child soldiers, in terms of content and teaching methods. In addition, there is a strong need for monitoring and evaluation – i.e. an in-depth field study that documents the details of education approaches adopted with child soldiers and their impact.


This paper documents the child soldier program work of Save the Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It notes that in the DRC, schools are financed through student fees. As such, only a minority of demobilised children are able to be reinserted into formal schooling. For those that can, the program emphasised ‘catch-up classes’ and successfully lobbied to remove the rigidities of age limits per academic level of the Congolese system.

The paper also discusses vocational training, which entail more hands-on learning along with literacy classes. It finds that such training programs can be problematic as they require an education level that has been found to be higher than the majority of the demobilised child soldiers. In addition, they often fail to incorporate plans – such as access to credit, apprenticeships or cooperative use of machines – that would support graduates in applying their skills; and are weak in monitoring of training outcomes. Successful vocational training
programs have incorporated market analysis and addressed the realities of trade in each community. For example, a program for embroidery classes in Bukavu for out-of-school girls in poor households conducted a market analysis to identify the two most popular products for consumers and taught these to the girls. This allowed them the girls to achieve self-financing trade.


The Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program (YRTEP), funded by USAID and implemented in Sierra Leone, targets not only ex-combatant youth but also other marginalised and war-affected youth. This combination has facilitated reintegration and reconciliation processes.

The teaching approach of YRTEP was supposed to be bottom-up and participatory; however, an evaluation of the program found that it was more directive. In addition, the curriculum was Western-based and not rooted in the cultures and languages of Sierra Leone. Many new concepts – such as post-traumatic stress disorder and environmental degradation, were introduced; however, Learning Facilitators (LFs) often found these to be difficult concepts to understand and spent hours studying them in order to be able to teach them. The evaluation also found that while children’s self-confidence and activism grew, the development of their literacy and numeracy was generally very low. In addition, another weakness of the YRTEP design was lack of attention paid to program closure and how this negatively affects communities. At the end of 6 month to year long training, which raised hopes and expectations with the learning of new skills, many were unable to translate this into income and/or employment.

Still, the YRTEP is considered a success for having gotten youth off the street and engaged in something meaningful to them and beneficial to the community. It was found that the program improved youth behaviour and that youth involved became less violent and rude. In addition, the program created a strong degree of community activism – which the report notes is an important achievement that should be utilised by other development programs.

Chrobok, V., 2005, ‘Demobilizing and Reintegrating Afghanistan’s Young Soldiers’, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, Bonn

This paper discusses DDR initiatives in Afghanistan aimed at child combatants. It outlines some key problems with DDR programs generally: a large proportion of potential beneficiaries, such as self-demobilised children girls or combatants in support roles, are often excluded from DDR programs. In addition, the programs solely target former child combatants, leaving aside the broader group of war-affected youth who also face many challenges. In Afghanistan, UNICEF developed a ‘community-based approach to reintegration’. Save the Children’s definition of this is as follows: “the focus of reintegration should be on improving the availability of health care, education and other key services in communities where child soldiers are being reintegrated” (p. 34). The paper states that the purpose of a community-based approach to reintegration is to “strengthen the communities that absorb former underage soldiers, to emphasise family livelihood activities and efforts to extend education and health benefits to all children in the communities” (pp. 34-35). The UNICEF program in Afghanistan provides vocational training (e.g. tailoring, carpentry, masonry, mechanics, metal working) or agricultural development training to youths. In addition, all participants receive basic educational training courses (e.g. literacy and numeracy) and are invited to engage in psycho-social activities such as sport teams or
traditional art forms. The paper critiques the limited duration of training, which is one year at most; and the failure to truly achieve a community-based approach. Despite the intention of including other war-affected youth, the program focused disproportionately on demobilised youth soldiers.

Women and girls

http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/DDR/WattevilleAfrica.pdf

This paper addresses the specific needs of female ex-combatants, abducted girls, wives of ex-combatants, and women in receiving communities during DDR programs; and identifies strategies for minimising gender discrimination in such programs. The paper discusses economic reintegration and focuses on a project designed and implemented by ACORD in Eritrea. In order to address the absence of women participants, partially due to lack of information, ACORD hired a female ex-combatant and trained her to reach other female ex-combatants; and decentralised the project, implementing it to go “from door to door”. In addition, the project provided business, management and administration training; and developed a way for poor female ex-combatants and wives of ex-combatants, without collateral, to secure their loans with group liability. The project also managed to secure childcare facilities, which is an important factor in freeing women up to take part in training courses and income-generation projects.

The paper discusses vocational training and education and advocates for a proper mapping of existing skills that can be transferred to civilian employment or income-generating activities and market analysis. It states that it is easier to assist with transferring skills than to provide training for new skills. Accelerated training programs confined to specific skills are preferable as incomes must be generated immediately in post-conflict contexts.

Girl combatants have particular needs. Their level of education is often low and many feel ashamed to be unable to attend class for their age. They often end up dropping out. The paper recommends a combination of remedial education, skills training and apprenticeship for this group.

http://www.womenwarpeace.org/webfm_send/1614

This ‘Gender-aware DDR Checklist’ raises issues that are frequently unaddressed in the planning stages of DDR. Regarding education and training schemes, it states: “Experience shows that training women in economically profitable skills must be undertaken as soon as they are encamped. Once the process of reinsertion begins, women will be overwhelmed with the burdens of housework, agricultural labour, fetching water, child and elder care, and have inadequate access to transportation. They are therefore unlikely to be able to attend classes or sustain any other re-training exercises” (p. 7).

Bouta, T., 2005, Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael Conflict Research Unit, The Hague

This report discusses the need for gender-sensitivity in DDR programs, including the need to adapt economic reintegration activities to the different needs and opportunities of female ex-combatants. It stresses that special measures should be instituted to ensure that female beneficiaries of reintegration programs have equal training and employment opportunities.
This would entail allocating funding for childcare and providing training as close as possible to where women reside. Potential employers should also be targeted for sensitisation training to encourage them to train and employ these women. In addition, women should be given a choice in deciding the type of skills that they are taught – including skills that typically may not be considered ‘women’s work’.


This study examines the situation of former girl combatants in Liberia. It finds that none of the girls interviewed finished their schooling before joining fighting forces; after the war, however, more than twice as many boys were estimated to be enrolled (50% of boys and 24% of girls). The study reports that education is highly valued among former girl combatants; however, many feel that they are unable to return to school. It stresses the importance of education for girl ex-combatants not only for learning, but also for increasing self-esteem, providing opportunities for decent work in the future and building a civilian identity. The study advocates for the provision of Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP), also known as catch-up education, that targets “over-age” school children and allows them to complete elementary education in a reduced period of time.

4. Additional information

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Websites visited


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