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Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa

Several devastating conflicts have persisted in Sub-Saharan Africa for the past 20 years or more. Some countries are still emerging from the era of cold war politics, while debilitating internal struggles continue to plague others. Ethiopia, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, and more recently, Angola and Mozambique are examples of the former. The latter is illustrated by the situation in countries such as Liberia, Somalia and the Sudan.

In response to requests from concerned governments, the Africa Region of the World Bank established a working group in 1992 to examine the African experience with demobilization and reintegration programs (DRPs) for ex-combatants and to assess the potential role of the Bank. It also began to offer, on request, technical and financial assistance to governments in designing and implementing DRPs. Anticipating and organizing for post-conflict economic development has become a Bank priority. Key to an effective transition from war to peace is an effective DRP.

This study, The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa, offers practical guidance and examples of good practice for improving the design and implementation of programs for demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration of ex-combatants and their dependents in client countries. It also provides a list of early warning signals that indicate whether the DRP process is not going according to plan and suggests preventive actions. Work on the ground, as well as case analysis in countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, and Rwanda form the basis of the suggested good practice in DRPs.

The Costs of War
The damage inflicted on the social capital and economic potential of African countries has been horrific. The impact of warfare on disinvestment, the destruction of physical infrastructure, and the deterioration of human capital through disability, death, and displacement is impossible to quantify. Armed conflict is surely one reason why at least 250 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa-nearly half the population - are living below the poverty line.

Despite this, African governments have devoted a substantial percentage of Gross Domestic Product to military expenditures (3.1 percent in 1992). Expenditures for defense have crowded out those for human development, and, in many SSA countries, they surpass expenditures for health and education combined.

Because reductions in military forces can yield substantial medium-term budgetary dividends, there is an important economic rationale for embarking on a demobilization program, particularly in peacetime. By reducing arms procurement and building security, DRPs have an overarching impact on fiscal policy, investment behavior, formulation of policy in the social sectors, and related poverty reduction efforts.

Making a DRP work

The study does not offer a blueprint for universal application as each country has some social, economic and political features unique to it.

However, experience on the ground across countries suggests that a successful DRP requires several actions:

- Clear political will on the part of governments;
- Coordinating centrally while decentralizing implementation authority to districts;
- Classifying ex-combatants according to their characteristics, needs and desired way of earning a livelihood;
- Offering a basic transitional assistance package (safety net);
- Providing counseling, information, training, employment, and social support while sensitizing communities and building on existing social capital;
- Finding a way to deliver assistance simply, minimizing transaction costs while maximizing benefits to ex-combatants; and
- Connecting to ongoing development efforts by retargeting and restructuring existing portfolios.

In war-to-peace transitions, demobilization and reintegration issues should be addressed at the earliest stages of the peace negotiation process. Strong political commitment and leadership are crucial for successful program implementation. Reinsertion and reintegration are not distinct phases after demobilization. Rather, they are part of a seamless web of transition from military to civilian life. As reinsertion and reintegration proceed, the needs of ex-combatants change, calling for different support measures. Program components should be ranked by simplicity of implementation, with the simplest components first on the list.
Economic and Social Dimensions

Ex-combatants are often a specially vulnerable group in need of priority targeted assistance. Socioeconomic data should be collected to reveal their characteristics, needs, and aspirations in order that appropriate program interventions be designed. To prevent any danger to security, ex-combatants should be released from military quarters as soon as possible after demobilization, and prior to discharge they should receive information about civilian rights and duties, opportunities and constraints.

Entitlement packages, which provide a safety net during the transition from war to peace, should reflect the needs of ex-combatants and their families. Packages help bridge the difficult transition between demobilization and reintegration. Monetary packages have several advantages over in-kind provision: transaction costs can be reduced, leakage can be better controlled, and beneficiaries can make flexible use of the entitlement. Using local banks for transferring cash in installments allows ex-combatants to access financial assistance throughout the country. Therefore, the banking system capacity or alternate payment systems, especially in rural areas, must be evaluated before transfers begin.

Ultimately, it is the interplay of a community's physical and social capital and the ex-combatant's financial and human capital that determines the success of reintegration. Efforts to strengthen social capital—for example, by using existing community organizations and channels of communication-enable communities to take development into their own hands and facilitate reintegration of ex-combatants. Informal networks of ex-combatants—discussion groups, veterans' associations and joint economic ventures— are key elements for successful economic and social reintegration. A community support program is also essential, and care should be taken that ex-combatants are not stigmatized.

Institutional and Management Concerns

Effective program implementation is key to sustainable reintegration. Among the critical institutional and management elements are:

Central coordination of DRPs by one civilian agency with overall responsibility - balanced by decentralization of implementation authority to the local level through existing organizational structures - makes for a successful institutional arrangement.

- Administrative costs need to be held down. The higher the transaction costs, the smaller the resources available to ex-combatants.

- The effectiveness of program interventions in relation to ongoing development initiatives is maximized by careful coordination within government and among other project promoters.

- Once the major program objectives have been fulfilled, the remaining activities should be integrated into the government's mainstream development efforts.
• Elected representatives of ex-combatants, as well as field-based staff, can perform crucial roles in facilitating reintegration.

• Local communities should be involved directly in decision-making, especially on important local matters, in order that scarce public resources be allocated in a transparent and socially accountable manner.

Staff training should begin before demobilization and should emphasize practical problem solving. A monitoring and evaluation system should keep abreast of major trends in the program and report regularly to management. Having an external auditor improves fund management, thereby giving confidence to donors and beneficiaries. Donor disbursement cycles should be closely aligned with DRP implementation schedules, and there must be close coordination among the government, NGOs, community-based groups and donors.

Economic and Social Impact

The peace dividend needs to be understood in social and economic terms, as well as in financial terms. The reinvestment of some savings from military downsizing into the development of a disciplined, high-quality defense force can itself produce a peace dividend by increasing security and reducing public fear.

A country's overall macroeconomic reform program, especially as it concerns the public expenditure mix, should be linked to the reintegration program. Jump-starting the economy by rehabilitating critical infrastructure can also be linked to reintegration programs that involve training and employment schemes for both reconstructing material assets and building human and social capital.

Demilitarization is a precondition for reviving civil society, reducing poverty, and sustaining development in Africa. Revitalizing civil society entails the promotion of local associations, community participation, and peer accountability, all of which reduce individual fear, enable collective condemnation of violence, and strengthen local security. These are essential for encouraging people to reinvest in their communities, both emotionally and financially. DRPs can play an important role in operationalizing these concepts.

Finally, because DRPs address broad issues of populations in transition, they may offer valuable lessons for projects that support the economic and social reintegration of other vulnerable groups, such as repatriated refugees, internally displaced populations, retrenched civil servants, and former employees of privatized parastatals. Such projects might focus on generic reinsertion and reintegration activities which include safety nets, information, counseling and referral services, resettlement schemes, credit and business advice, and retraining and employment programs.

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