

Findings

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Best Practices
Infobrief



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Best Practice in War-to-Peace Transition:

The Uganda Veterans Assistance Program

Objectives: As part of its broader efforts to rehabilitate the economy and society following decades of warfare, the Government of Uganda decided to shift the burden of its public expenditure away from defense and toward the social and economic sectors. It established the civilian Uganda Veterans Assistance Board (UVAB) to facilitate the demobilization and subsequent reintegration of 36,400 soldiers of the National Resistance Army into productive civilian life. The Uganda Veterans Assistance Program (UVAP) also took into the account the needs of approximately 125,000 dependents who were resettled with the veterans. It was implemented between 1992 and 1996 with assistance from donors, coordinated by the World Bank.

Impact on the Ground:

Veterans and their dependents constituted a particularly vulnerable group due to their lack of civic awareness, low skill level and few resources, a culture of dependency, and their potential threat to security. UVAB assistance consisted of three components: demobilization, reinsertion assistance (a transitional safety net cash equivalent to meet basic needs for a six-month period or one crop-growing season) and reintegration (in particular counseling and training). In conjunction with the general availability of land, the reinsertion assistance provide the means for

the successful economic reintegration of the majority of veterans and their families.

Social reintegration proved more difficult, and many veterans had to overcome initial community resentment and mistrust, despite sensitization activities involving high-ranking government officials. The communities finally accepted the returning veterans as, contrary to their expectations, only few have shown antisocial behavior. The crime rate among veterans is below the national average, and in many cases, the presence of veterans has actually improved the security situation.

While it is too early to determine whether the long-term reintegration of veterans has been achieved, the recently completed program is widely hailed as a success. Political will, needs-based planning and donor coordination through the World Bank culminated in timely and effective program completion.

Lessons Learned:

- Preparatory studies to determine (i) the socioeconomic profile of the veterans (characteristics, needs, and aspirations), (ii) opportunities for veterans in product and factor markets, and (iii) institutional implementation requirements are essential for appropriate program design.
- Issuing a non-transferable discharge certificate (i) ensures that veterans have access to their benefits and (ii) reduces the risk of targeting errors. The continuous provision of information to beneficiaries about opportunities, constraints, and procedures significantly enhances reintegration.
- It is the interplay of a community's physical and social capital and a veteran's financial and human capital that determines the ease and success of reintegration.
- Central coordination through a temporary agency, balanced by decentralizing implementation authority to the communities, makes for a powerful institutional arrangement. Field offices enable (i) beneficiaries to have easier access to program benefits and (ii) the government to make the program more responsive to local needs.

Key documents on Demobilization and War-to Peace Transition

Nat J. Colletta, M. Kostner and I. Wiederhofer, *Case Studies in War-to Peace Transition, The Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Ethiopia, Namibia and Uganda*, Discussion Paper No 331, Africa Technical Department Series, World Bank, 1996.

Nat J. Colletta, M. Kostner and I. Wiederhofer, *The Transition from War to Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa, Directions in Development series*, World Bank, 1996.

World Bank, *Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa: The Evidence from Seven Country Case Studies*, Discussion Paper, Report No. IDP-130, October 1993.

World Bank, *Demobilization and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa: Eight Country Case Studies*, Working Paper, October 1993.

For more information on this specific study, contact ***Nat J. Colletta***, AFTHR Rm. J2-167, World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington D.C., 20433. Tel. (202) 473-4163.
