

DRC: Peacebuilding-based DDR

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Following the DRC's Lusaka peace agreement in 1999, the World Bank organised funding for a Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP). Beginning in 2004, a programme to demobilise, disarm and reintegrate 150,000 ex-combatants, mainly militia members, continued to function alongside active warfare. In North Kivu in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a small local Congolese NGO with fifteen years of local peacebuilding experience began a DDR program.

Drawing on peacebuilding skills, a DDR programmes run by the Centre for Resolution of Conflicts (CRC) emphasised building an infrastructure of support for sustainable reintegration.⁴⁷ CRC viewed reintegration as the cornerstone of successful DDR, and as such advocated calling the efforts RDD to emphasise the need to think about reintegration from the very beginning of any DDR program. From CRC's point of view, the donor-supported DDR programmes neglected to consider how ex-combatants would cope with reintegration. Money was available for "sensitizing" armed groups on the need to disarm and demobilise, but money was not available for reintegration or for considering how to prepare communities where they were to be reintegrated. DDR programmes assumed ex-combatants would be integrated into the state's armed forces, even though these units also were to be demobilised.

The challenge

DDR efforts focused on disarmament and demobilization, but neglected reintegration.

Theory of change:

Programs to prepare and support ex-combatants and the communities that will accept them by focusing on community development will enable sustainable human security.

CRC designed a programme for reintegration where it became an opportunity for community development. Creating a preventive infrastructure to handle land conflicts was a key component of the CRC approach. Together, there was a coherent plan for livelihood creation through seeds and agriculture kit. This paired with the development of a community-based conflict resolution system that addressed issues of IDPs and combatants returning and settling on land.

Six task forces worked on the reintegration process, each with approximately 12 people made up of community and religious leaders, former child soldiers, and former militia commanders. CRC trained the task forces on human rights and conflict resolution. The task forces play a variety of roles through CRC partnerships with other agencies such as FAO, UNDP, UNHCR and Save the Children/UNICEF.

First, CRC advertises their DDR programme in a variety of ways. Radio programmes encouraged combatants to leave armed groups individually. Negotiations with militia leaders encouraged demobilisation and reintegration for entire militia groups. MONUSCO (and before that MONUC) dropped leaflets from helicopters inviting combatants to call the CRC director to discuss reintegration.

⁴⁷ This case is drawn from *Coming Home: A Case Study of Community Led Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in D.R. Congo*. London: Peace Direct, 2011.



Photo 26: Community in DRC. Photo Credit: Flickr CC Mike Rosenberg

CRC staff would then travel without protection into the bush – sometimes waiting for several days - to negotiate with militia commanders, to return with all of their men or to release child soldiers. CRC provided accompaniment for 4,276 ex-combatants (3532 men, 270 women, and 474 children). This accompaniment ensured the safe passage of ex-combatants to MONUSCO or FARD camps where they are demobilised by removing their weapons, military-style clothing or other symbols of their combatant status and recording their names. CRC then accompanied them to the communities where they were reintegrated. This helped make sure that militia members made it all the way into CRC reintegration programs, which CRC viewed as pivotal to successful DDR.

Simultaneously with advertising the programme to militia members, CRC prepared communities for receiving militia members. CRC persuaded communities through incentives such as reparation programmes where militia members would do community service, such as building roads. CRC also provided a range of livelihood options, some available to non-combatant community members. For example, CRC began joint civilian and ex-combatant cooperatives for 1334 ex-combatants. Inclusion of civilians in the cooperatives ensured that ex-combatants alone did not receive the bulk of assistance, since this would create an unfortunate incentive for others to join militias. Cooperatives begin with 30 members and small grants of \$2000 as start up. Cooperatives often grew quickly, some with 200 members, as they extend inclusion of others. Ex-combatants may provide community service by rehabilitating local infrastructure of roads and markets. This increases their acceptance by local communities and enables further community development.

CRC found that civilian communities provided a socializing model of civilian values and provided a new social network for militia members that affirmed acceptable civilian behaviours. In addition, CRC supported the creation of voluntary social networks to attend to reintegrated militia members and the community. This includes community conflict resolution task forces that help to ease social tensions. The CRC set up an early warning system and provided mediation for local disputes. The local conflict resolution task forces were created to warn of impending conflicts over land, for example, as IDPs return to an area. The task forces supported mediation to take place between key stakeholders so that an agreement can be made without resort to violence.

CRC supported 119 communities in the reintegration process by hosting call-in radio clubs for two-way dialogue on weekly CRC radio programs. Listeners could text or call into the radio show with their concerns or ideas. Some villages used these radio clubs as a way of fostering participatory planning and development on projects such as bicycle repair, hairdressing, hydroelectric power and propagating seedlings for reforestation. There is also a synergy between these programs. The radio clubs foster trust with local communities, that then makes the other stages of reintegration work more smoothly.

PeaceDirect, the London-based funder of CRC, is carrying out on-going monitoring and evaluation of CRC's DDR effort. Ex-combatants who went to communities with CRC's intervention are compared both with ex-combatants who went through other, non-CRC DDR programs, and with ex-combatants who did not receive CRC or other DDR support. Researchers also interviewed CRC-assisted communities and non-CRC assisted communities to evaluate their view of the program. Researchers found that 81% of ex-combatants who did not receive assistance would consider re-recruiting to an armed group compared to 58% of those receiving non-CRC assistance and only 10% of those ex-combatants that CRC did assist. An evaluation of CRC's work found that its identity as a local organisation with a long history of working with local communities enables it to be credible and trustworthy for armed groups, many of whom have become wary of FARDC, UN and MONUSCO. "CRC's long term commitment, visibility, local knowledge, first hand awareness of the impacts of conflict at a personal and community level, networks of contacts and strong staff commitment and work ethic have given CRC great credibility with armed groups, with communities and with partners."⁴⁸

Peace Direct also compares the cost for CRC's DDR program, a small fraction of the costs of large scale, government or contractor-run programs. For example, the cost for these task forces was \$1500 to start up each Task Force with \$500 per year for travel funds. Task Force members volunteered 44000 hours of time per year. In contrast, some DDR programmes easily cost \$1500 per armed individual.

⁴⁸ Peace Direct Evaluation Report cited in *Coming Home*, p. 11.