How to Assess Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

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The social reintegration of ex-combatants is one of the most critical aspects of peacebuilding processes. However, contrary to economic reintegration in which it would be possible to set up some quantitative indicators in terms of accessing vocational training opportunities, employment and livelihoods income for the assessment of success, social reintegration is an intangible outcome. Therefore, what constitutes a successful social reintegration and how it could be assessed continues to be the challenge for both academics and practitioners. This article will undertake an investigation of the preliminary parameters of social reintegration at the macro, meso and micro levels in order to identify a set of indicators for programme assessment. A nuanced understanding of ex-combatant reintegration is expected to allow the development of context-based indicators according to the specific characteristics of that particular environment. The article also recommends the use of participatory research methods as they would be more appropriate for the measurement of social reintegration impact.

Keywords social reintegration; ex-combatants; peacebuilding

Introduction

Despite the acknowledgment that the social reintegration of ex-combatants can make positive contributions to social cohesion and the peacebuilding process, little is known as to how this may materialize. Indeed, as Gomes Porto et al. (2007, p. 147) state:

Recognising this important point...points us in the direction of long term reintegration as a critical component of processes of social reconciliation—and the need therefore to conduct deeper research into the underlying and subtle process by which identities affect and are affected by the reintegration process.

Given our inchoate understandings of both reconciliation and the positive contributions to peacebuilding of ex-combatant reintegration, in theory and practice, the need to investigate the relationship between the two, utilizing comprehensive analysis of social reintegration is necessary. It can be anticipated that an understanding of the ways in which social reintegration occurs will
facilitate a more comprehensive consideration of how disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes may promote the rebuilding of social cohesion and the ways in which such programmes may contribute to enhanced reconciliation. Therefore, a shift from quantitative indicators of reintegration to more qualitative, socially-oriented indicators would be required. DDR and reintegration programmes to date have generally been evaluated in terms of economic reintegration with output indicators such as levels of employment or enrolment on training courses. This article is critical of such an approach, as it does not place a high enough emphasis on the issue of social reintegration, which is vital for effective reconciliation and, therefore, sustainable peace. Consequently, an alternative perspective from which to view the process of reintegration that emphasizes the importance of social reintegration, and appropriate indicators, rather than focusing on conventional commitments to economic indicators is necessary. When it comes to reintegration, there are certain limitations with the application of quantifiable indicators, as related activities are primarily societal and take place in a long-term process. One of the main challenges is therefore to measure the success of reintegration, as the perception of ‘success’ may differ according to different political agendas and expectations from the process and hence there is a lack of clarity on what constitutes a successful reintegration.

Moreover, when it comes to the challenge of social reintegration there is a paucity of specific programmes. It is important to note that social reintegration would have a different meaning and impact, and face different challenges in different war-to-peace transitions. In cases where former combatants go back home as a ‘victorious’ side such as Kosovo, the significance of social reintegration for the overall peacebuilding dynamics would be much less than those environments where the armed conflict had a huge impact on the societal relationships such as Sierra Leone and Liberia (Özerdem 2003, Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). Another typical DDR scenario to consider for social reintegration would be such environments where former combatants are already home-based and they would join in fighting in a more ‘seasonal’ way or fighting with an armed group would take place within a short distance of their homes such as the case with most Taliban members in Afghanistan. Therefore, it would be important to consider the specific socio-political and cultural characteristics of such environments and what they would mean for the challenge of social reintegration (Özerdem 2008).

Within such an overall context, the article would focus on social reintegration indicators in those environments where the societal relationship were either badly damaged or completely disintegrated. In other words, the process of going back ‘home’ for ex-combatants would likely to face a number of intractable problems. There are a number of general issues to consider in such a context, but the underlying causes of those problems is likely to be the lack of trust and confidence between the receiving communities and ex-combatants. This would be mainly because of atrocities committed by former combatants against their communities. In some instances, ex-combatants may have been forced by their
commanders to commit such atrocities in order to break combatant’s societal ties with their families and communities, as often was the case for child soldiers in the West Africa context. However, the experience of lack of trust as an impact of war on communities would form only a certain part of the challenges faced in the context of social reintegration. There would be a number of other considerations to bear in mind such as the share of natural resources, access to land and other employment opportunities, the risk of ex-combatants involving in criminal activities and the overall community perception of mistrust and insecurity towards them (Annan 2009, Maclay and Özerdem 2010).

Therefore, the main focus of this article is on the question of how to assess the social reintegration of former combatants and what indicators could be used to evaluate its outcomes and outputs. The article explores the development of indicators both quantitative and qualitative and both empirical and anecdotal in order to make an assessment on the successes and failures of social reintegration. In order to achieve this, the article proposes a nuanced understanding of ex-combatant social reintegration in the analysis section. Finally, having identified the lack of trust and confidence as one of the key challenges in the effective measurement of social reintegration through conventional research methods, the article proposes the use of participatory research methodologies as a viable alternative, which will form the main focus of discussions before conclusions.

**Conceptual Exploration of Ex-Combatant Reintegration**

The way in which the reintegration of ex-combatants is viewed will depend to a great degree, on the philosophy underpinning the DDR programme and this will, to some extent, influence the way in which they are designed as well as the perceived success of such programmes. Essentially, reintegration can be seen as ‘the process whereby former combatants and their families and other displaced persons are assimilated into the social and economic life of (civilian) communities’ (Özerdem 2002, p. 962). In order to achieve such reintegration the DDR programme must identify the most effective portfolio of activities with which to address the needs of the society. There will generally be some overlap with the demobilization phase of the DDR programme in that the registration and needs assessment process during demobilization will inform reintegration planning. Additionally, the ‘reorientation’ or ‘reinsertion’ package administered during demobilization will be of significant value in the reintegration stage, together with a form of counselling and job referral service that is very often put in place to facilitate reintegration (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). Counselling and job referral services may include as varying array of services. For example, in Mozambique ex-combatants were provided with access to health care, training and social activities (Kingma and Sayers 1995) while in Ukraine (re)educational programmes and language tuition was provided to reintegrating combatants (Heinemann-Gruder 2002).
The range of activities or services built into each DDR programme differs in each case but should, according to the UN Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), fit within the five general principles that guide a DDR programme influenced by the human security agenda. These principles ensure that a DDR programme should be: people-centred; flexible, accountable and transparent; nationally owned; integrated; and well planned (IDDRS 2006). The IDDRS bring together lessons learnt over more than 20 years across six UN agencies, departments, funds and programmes to provide: ‘DDR practitioners the opportunity to make informed decisions based on a clear, flexible and in-depth body of guidance across the range of DDR activities; serve as a common foundation for the commencement of integrated operational planning in Headquarters and at the country level; [and] function as a resource for the training of DDR specialists’ (IDDRS 2006, p. 1.10). Within the IDDRS, indicators of assessment are implicitly and explicitly discussed however, as with most evaluation and consideration of DDR, they focus primarily on economic reintegration. As Kingma (2002) notes, there exists a clear distinction between the different components of ex-combatants reintegration—economic, political and social—and it is therefore necessary to develop indicators that more appropriately speak to each of these components of reintegration.

Economic reintegration is seen as a way in which ‘to equip former fighters with productive skills and employment so that they can return to civilian life’ (Ginifer 2003, p. 43) and is viewed as important for the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of the DDR process (Özerdem 2003). Returning combatants have a primary need to provide for themselves and their dependants and as such DDR programmes must address this need in order to reduce the incentive for ex-combatants to return to arms (Last et al. 1997). The economic reintegration initiatives continue to be the main approach and applications undertaken by DDR programmes around the world. The conventional approach to economic reintegration would incorporate some of the following types of activities such as the provision of vocational training programmes, micro-enterprise development, labour intensive public works, rehabilitation of agriculture, and employment opportunities through joining post-conflict security sector structures, etc.

The political reintegration of ex-combatants is also significant as ‘the presence of a functioning state and legal system is one of the central requirements for peacebuilding’ and as such ‘the strengthening of state capacity and law and order, and the development of processes of democratic decision-making and non-violent conflict resolution, are therefore necessary to prevent slipping back into war and the demobilisation falling apart’ (Kingma 2002, p. 188). Political reintegration, ‘the process through which the ex-combatant and his or her family become a full part of decision-making processes’ (Kingma 2000, p. 28), thus forms an important component of the reintegration and peace-building process. Ex-combatants very often become involved with a military group because they identify with the politics of that group and oppose the politics of the government (Gomes Porto et al. 2007). Their effective political reintegration in the post-conflict environment is therefore instrumental in the
stability and security, as such reintegration should ensure they do not become a marginalized group and thus feel the need to return to arms. There are not many examples in DDR experiences that would incorporate specific political and social reintegration initiatives. The conventional thinking on such reintegration needs would be such that once former combatants are provided with opportunities of employment and livelihoods, the other two types of reintegration would happen in a more gradual way. In fact, it is also important to note that between these two types of reintegration, social reintegration gets the least attention from the DDR programmes, as political reintegration might be dealt with as part of wider negotiations and political settlements. In other words, the transformation of non-state armed groups into mainstream political parties in post-conflict contexts could be considered as a means of political reintegration such as the cases of El Salvador (FMLN), Mindanao (MNLF), and Sudan (SPLA) (Özerdem 2008).1

Finally, effective social reintegration of ex-combatants is vital to the success of DDR programmes and the greater post-conflict reconstruction effort for a multitude of reasons. Upon returning to their home communities, ex-combatants are faced with a dramatically changed and changing social landscape, one defined by violence and destruction, and it is in this environment that their reintegration takes place. This issue is ever more salient for ex-combatants creating homes in new communities. When writing on Mozambique, Nordstrom (1997, p. 123) provides a cultural definition of violence as being ‘the destruction of home and humanity, of hope and future, of valued traditions and the integrity of the community’. Such an environment presents a hostile picture and it is clear of the need for the social reintegration of ex-combatants. The need for effective social reintegration becomes increasingly more apparent when one considers the fact that the identity of the ex-combatants and the community in relation to each other has undergone a transformation as a result of the conflict (Veale and Stavrou 2003).

Social Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: Challenges and Opportunities

The social reintegration of former combatants often faces a set of problems and obstacles. It is important to recognize these issues in order to be in a position from which it will be possible to better design and implement DDR programmes. Many of the problems and obstacles to social reintegration are ironically the negatives of the factors necessary for successful reintegration, for example, when community acceptance is not forthcoming and stigmatization is evident, when local leaders are not supportive instead excluding former combatants from activities from which they could benefit and when political commitment is not in place. Furthermore, tensions between the conflict-generated identities of ex-combatants and civilian identities of the community very often serve to retard
the enabling of successful social reintegration (Gear 2002a). Ginifer (2003, p. 42) further demonstrates this issue:

A major challenge has been to repair relations between ex-combatants and their communities. Ex-combatants have frequently had to overcome the resentment of communities recalling crimes committed during the war, and this has undermined efforts at social reconciliation. Furthermore...the provision of targeted assistance to ex-combatants has often been perceived as rewarding the perpetrators of the violence, and not as investment of peace and security.

Ex-combatants find it hard to adjust their attitudes and expectations (Kingma 1997) and very often suffer from psychosocial problems as a result of the conflict which negatively impact on their ability to operate in civilian life. Even when former combatants can find work they often find the top-down approach to military organizational management frustrates their attempts to reintegrate into civilian economic life. Ex-combatants frequently describe community perceptions of them as negative and indeed may experience stigmatization. In studies of ex-combatants in South Africa, Gear (2002b) draws attention to how ex-combatants experience ongoing stigmatization and stereotyping in their post-military lives. Much of the stigmatization of ex-combatants is related to communities not understanding them and fearing of them, regardless of whether or not they are seen as liberators or freedom fighters or human rights violators. This is primarily because information is limited and community sensitization is, in most programming, weak and/or non-existent. Women who have fought are often seen as having ‘acted against culturally determined gender roles, participating in inter-caste [or ethnic] marriages or behaving in ways regarded as “promiscuous” or “aggressive”’ (Saferworld 2010, p. 33).

These experiences make it increasingly more difficult for ex-combatants to successfully reintegrate into the community and this is further exacerbated by the feelings of betrayal ex-combatants often face. Former combatants commonly express anger towards the government, former military superiors, community leaders and the community in general, and, in some cases, their own families. These feelings arise due to the perception of inadequate provision for ex-combatants returning home, resentment at having been ‘sold down the river’ by former military superiors and political bodies and a general feeling of being ‘discarded, neglected and forgotten by those for whom they fought’ (Gear 2002b, p. 16). Fundamentally these perceptions serve to marginalize ex-combatants from the community and produce a volatile, angry and frustrated, socially excluded population who pose a credible threat to the immediate security of society and must be regarded as of paramount importance to the success of the post-conflict reconstruction effort and integral to any ambitions of a successful transformation of conflict to a reconciled society (Muggah 2009).

Despite the evident importance of, and explicit need for, the successful social reintegration of ex-combatants there seems to be a limited appreciation of this within the design and implementation of DDR programmes. It is apparent that the primary aim of the reintegration component of DDR programmes is to assimilate
ex-combatants into the economy and facilitate their role into productive civilian life. While this aim is indeed important and necessary, placing such an emphasis on this may lead to the dangerous position of neglecting the social reintegration of ex-combatants and this is reflected in DDR design. DDR programmes across the world accentuate a focus on the tangible benefits of economic reintegration, often to the detriment of social reintegration. This is also demonstrated in evaluations of DDR programmes by policymakers and academics. Such a focus is arguably problematic at best and dangerous at worst. Despite the relative lack of attention placed on the social reintegration of ex-combatants in DDR programmes there is evidence in some writings that there do exist methods through which successful social reintegration can be achieved (Gleichmann et al. 2004, Humphreys and Weinstein 2005).

Of particular importance to the success of social reintegration is the degree to which receiving communities are willing and able to accept ex-combatants and the efforts they expend in making this a realistic possibility. Community sensitization exercises can be influential in preparing a community for reintegration and should be promoted. Education and support at this stage is vital to the development and fostering of trust between communities and ex-combatants (Ginifer 2003). Herein lies a problem: ex-combatants returning to a changed environment require community efforts to facilitate their reintegration however; communities may be intrinsically and understandably fearful, resentful and apprehensive of ex-combatants. One of the key obstacles to this is community resentment related to the benefits received by ex-combatants to facilitate their reinsertion and reintegration (Bøås and Hatløy 2008). Unless the community see a benefit to accepting ex-combatants back this can have the effect of heightening tensions and making social reintegration more difficult. One way to combat this dilemma has been demonstrated by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) in Sierra Leone who disseminated ‘the message to communities that they will benefit, directly and indirectly, from the fact that ex-combatants are engaged in rehabilitating damaged societies, and that they will become independent and less likely to commit acts less inimical to society’ (Ginifer 2003, p. 47). A further way this may be facilitated is the promotion of community development in which the community is united in order to define their needs and problems and mobilize the necessary resources to address these issues (Veale and Stavrou 2003). A similar system to this has been in operation in Rwanda in which ex-combatants work together with non-combatants on community development issues. This provides a combination of economic and social reintegration and facilitates a wider understanding and acceptance of ex-combatants (Verwimp and Verpoorten 2004).

In order for the above techniques to be successful ex-combatants need to engage in the process also. Within the DDR process in Sierra Leone ex-combatants have been encouraged to participate in projects that are beneficial to the community ‘such as civil works, street cleaning, and helping rehabilitate shelter. It has also supported adult education programmes, civic and peace education, music, sports groups, and other projects that help to rebuild social capital’
Ex-combatants have also been encouraged to realize that wrongful acts were committed during the course of the conflict and to show remorse for these (Ginifer 2003). When ex-combatants make a concerted effort to socially reintegrate, such an eventuality is more likely and if other factors are in place, such as accommodating local leaders, measures aimed at promoting collaborative working relationship between ex-combatants and civilians, and general reconstruction in the community, then the chances of a successful ex-combatant social reintegration are increased.

During the conflict period combatants construct a military identity through their training and experience (Gear 2002a, Fischer 2005). This identity can be particularly problematic as it leads to the tendency for the social environment to be militarized by ex-combatants and can be pervasive for a considerable period of time (Kingma 2002). Indeed, ‘only if and when a veteran is successful in establishing an independent civilian identity will the distinction between “veteran” and “civilian” vanish’ (Colletta et al. 1996, p. 277). Even in the case where employment is forthcoming such a military identity can retard full reintegration. Research indicates that social reintegration can facilitate the reconstruction of identity from combatant to civilian as this involves ‘reinsertion in the family and community, and the mental elimination of the perception of being (member of) a specific group [that is, a combatant]’ (Brito and Mussanhan 1997, p. 3). Effective social reintegration therefore indicates towards the forgiveness and acceptance of ex-combatants on the part of the community, and the mechanisms utilized to achieve this enable ex-combatants to ‘overcome his acquired identity as “a killing machine” and regain a civilian identity after which he “becomes a person again”’ (Lundin 1998, p. 112). Whilst in some cases it is necessary to recognize the positive roles by many ex-combatants during wartime, it is also vital that this identity is reconstructed into that of a civilian in order to ensure their ability to effectively navigate the civilian environment and thrive in it. Without doing this, community acceptance is harder to achieve as ex-combatants themselves may be unsure of their own identity (Bowd 2006). In the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding such an identity cannot be understated, as it is this very transformation of identity that allows reconciliation to take place.

Issues associated with a lack of community acceptance and difficulties with undergoing a successful identity transformation, along with other factors such as employment possibilities and familial responsibilities, can coalesce to dictate an ex-combatant may decide to relocate, particularly to urban areas, rather than returning home. This can make things easier for an ex-combatant as their past may not be known and they can, in a sense, reinvent their identity. Conversely, it can also make reintegration (or integration as it is a new environment) more difficult due to the lack of a support network.

A further potential benefit of social reintegration is the way in which it can ameliorate the effects of war trauma. During conflict, numerous atrocities occur leaving both combatants and communities suffering from the debilitating effects of war trauma and this is arguably the gravest of legacies in the post-conflict
society; roads and bridges can be rebuilt but hearts and minds possibly cannot. Measures to promote social reintegration, such as psychosocial counselling and indigenous healing techniques can aid in the transition from a socialized military identity (combatant), through a transition phase between conflict and peace (ex-combatant) to that of a civilian. Generally psychosocial counselling is provided by the DDR programme or by other provisions put in place by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and will only include the former combatant and perhaps his or her family. Such counselling can be particularly useful in enabling ex-combatants to relearn patterns of thought and emotion synonymous with being a civilian and can provide mechanisms through which ex-combatants can cope with the trauma of conflict such as violent rages, nightmares, low self-esteem and confidence, depression and reliance on alcohol or drugs. However, although this is limited to the individual and perhaps his or her family it can contribute to community reconciliation due to knock-on effects.

Measuring Social Reintegration

An example of inadequate consideration of social reintegration indicators in a DDR programme is that of the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), financed by the World Bank and 13 donors and collaborating with national governments and over 30 partner organizations across seven African countries in the Great Lakes and Central Africa region, affecting around 300,000 ex-combatants up to its conclusion in 2009. The MDRP had some degree of consideration in its design for social reintegration emphasizing the need for participation of local authorities and communities and to engender community support through the rehabilitation of social infrastructure, conflict management, and reconciliation. However, it terms of indicators utilized for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) the final report of the MDRP itself only reports against strategic, programme and output indicators (MDRP 2010). Moreover, only three indicators across all seven programmes related to social reintegration and all were at the performance (output) indicator level rather than the outcome level which measure the impact of the intervention. These were for the Uganda (50 per cent of Reporters engaged in gender and generational appropriate community-based programmes) and Republic of Congo (40 community infrastructure projects completed by programme end and 20 communities benefited from conflict management activities) programmes (Scanteam 2009).

Indicators for the achievements of social reintegration can be quantitative or qualitative, with the former being the most common in DDR programming and the latter being often more difficult to measure and to associate directly with a programme. Indeed, it is usually proxy indicators which are used within DDR programmes; those events or benchmarks which have been impacted indirectly by the programme, the measurement of which can assist in the evaluation of the programme and ‘are usually associated with the logical frameworks or results
matrixes of specific program documents or the mandates and budgetary requirements of the institution. They tend by nature to be quantitative and focused on the funding institution/agency’s priorities and aligned with its culture. They theoretically remain valid for the budgetary period of the program, usually annual, and deviation from expected outcome is an exception to be explained’ (Molloy 2009, p. 17).

The formulation of indicators of achievement in this way can be claimed to limit the success of DDR programmes as they have far broader influence in the planning and implementation phases of the programme rather than a purely retrospective review. Rather than focusing on quantitative-based proxy indicators, this article argues that an emphasis on the development and operationalization of indicators, qualitative and quantitative, that take cognizance of qualitative results and outcomes associated with a maximalist approach\(^2\) to DDR would result in the development of programmes that are more likely to be successful in the social reintegration of former combatants. Such indicators should be developed under a consideration of broader social impacts and influences and should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the context to which they are to be applied. The appropriate formulation of indicators of achievement that focus on qualitative results would then be reflected in an overall programme design that adequately prioritizes social aspects of reintegration, including consultation and national ownership, adequate targeting of programme beneficiaries, the provision of apposite staffing levels and levels of diversity of specialization, programme implementation that benefits the wider community as well as former combatants, and an assessment process that divulges the true impact of the programme.

In the development of appropriate indicators, the contextual analysis in terms of where DDR programme is taking place and its security, economic and political characteristics would need to be identified clearly. As shown in Table 1, the contextual analysis would be supported by a profile analysis of the caseload concerned as well as the availability and distribution of arms and weapons. Finally, before starting the DDR programme there needs to be a clear analysis of reintegration opportunities in terms of employment, capacities and services. By building a pre- and post-intervention structure, such an analysis could become a tool of measurement too. It is recommended by UNDDR (2011) that all indicators need to be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) and every indicator must have an indicator baseline. The baseline is the first critical measurement of the indicator, as every indicator needs an indicator target.

However, indicators of social reintegration should explicitly emphasize broader, long-term changes whilst taking into account short-term, more focused changes. This will enable effective monitoring thus facilitating dynamic programming that can respond to changing contexts and situations of former combatants and recipient communities, as well as enabling a deeper level of evaluation that can more accurately recognize social reintegration pathways and provide stronger, more appropriate lessons learnt for future programming. In addition, such indicators should be appreciative of cross-cutting issues
influencing social reintegration, for example, gender, social groups (caste, ethnicity, religious), wider reconciliation programming.

In order to develop indicators for the social reintegration of ex-combatants, it is therefore essential to have a nuanced understanding of how such a process works, with what kind of dynamics and through the role(s) of what type of actors. The social reintegration of former combatants can be understood through the analogy of a painting. Macro-level elements are akin to the canvas; the combination of political will and security and stability provide the foundations from which social reintegration is made possible. Without these the successful social reintegration cannot be fully realized as all aspects of the process are undermined before they really begin. Meso-level elements can be compared to the outline of the painting; together demobilization camps, community sensitization and acceptance, positive local leaders, and others, create and prepare the environment for successful social reintegration to take place. If these elements are not forthcoming

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<th>Table 1. Conventional areas of measurement for DDR programmes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify baseline to measure development context (pre/post intervention)</td>
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<td>Identify baseline to measure security context (pre-/post-intervention)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify size, organization and deployment of primary target group (pre-/post-intervention)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify availability and distribution of weapons (pre-/post-intervention)</td>
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<td>Identify reintegration opportunities for the primary target group (pre-/post-intervention)</td>
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<td>Command and control</td>
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<td>Dependent profile</td>
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<td>Collective and individual ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification and assessment of areas of return or resettlement (local demand for goods and services; demand for skilled and unskilled labour; identification of economic reintegration opportunities; etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-economic assessments and mapping of economic opportunities (economic sectors and reintegration opportunities, public/private partnerships; existing infrastructure to facilitate economic activity; general training capacities at local level, etc.</td>
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</table>

there is little direction or structure to social reintegration and any successes that are achieved are partial and leave gaps that could undermine the whole process. Micro-level elements represent the colour; the union of former combatant motivation, the family, associations, economic reintegration and other factors operate at the grassroots level to negotiate the environment that has been made possible and created by the macro- and meso-level elements. If any of these aspects are absent the painting will remain incomplete.

These three levels of social reintegration are interdependent. For successful social reintegration to occur it is not only necessary that the elements within each level are present, but also that they function together to represent a whole. If one or more of the elements is missing, it will weaken the social reintegration process as a whole. Certain elements—political will, community sensitization and acceptance and former combatant motivation—may be more crucial to the process as a whole and would result in greater damage overall if they were absent. However, the non-existence or susceptibility of other elements from all levels will also undermine the process, to the point that that the successful social reintegration of former combatants remains elusive.

From the diagram in Figure 1 the complex interrelatedness of former combatant social reintegration is evident. The three levels of macro-, meso- and micro-level elements each comprise a number of elements without which the social reintegration of former combatants would be made exceptionally more difficult or unattainable. The pyramid shape represents the positioning of each of the elements according to their political level rather than their relative importance. Therefore, the higher the level on the pyramid the higher the political level would be. Each level also has an effect on at least one other level. The thick black arrow to the right-hand side of the pyramid represents the overarching effect the macro level has on both the meso and micro level. Within the levels themselves we can see the effects that each element has on the other, with evidently a strong relationship between the meso and micro level. The relationships between the individual elements within the levels are either uni- or bi-relational in terms of the direction of influence; this is indicated by the arrows. The colouring of the arrows refers to the point of origin of the influence, that is, for example, the blue arrows indicate influence from former combatant motivation/behaviour on association membership and economic reintegration. The red arrows highlight the bi-relational nature of the two elements (See online version of this article for colour image of Figure 1).

Clearly, as indicated in Figure 1, the social reintegration of former combatants is a difficult achievement, and in order for it to be successful, requires a number of actors to not only commit to it but to actively engage with the process. Upon their return to their community, or entry into a new community, the social reintegration of former combatants essentially depends on the undertaking of a trust-building process that begins with their micro group. As trust is established within the immediate family, it gradually increases to include the neighbour network through sustained exchange that is necessary as a result of poverty-induced interdependence. This takes place over a period of time during which the
trust that develops between former combatants and their families and neighbour networks expands further still as the community in general becomes used to their presence within the community as a whole and in the various associations and community activities they engage in, in particular. The mutually beneficial nature of exchange, economic reconstruction, community development endeavours and community events, serve to increase civic mindedness, collective responsibility, solidarity and interdependence between those who involve themselves in these activities. Therefore, the various interactions that occur within the process of former combatant social reintegration combine to assist in the rebuilding of trust, communication, cooperation and coordination through the familiarity that develops as a result of the proximity between former combatants and civilians when former combatants engage in the community.

Such is the fragility of the whole social reintegration process, certainly in its infancy, that even if the presence of various elements that could potentially augment successful social reintegration are apparent this does not entirely
ensure such success. There are a number of isolated problems with, or obstacles to, the successful social reintegration of former combatants that can conspire to destabilize the process. These obstacles—such as the starting point of former combatants, access to land and housing, psychosocial issues and vulnerable groups (women combatants, child combatants and disabled combatants)—can, in part, be ameliorated through the achievement of the identified elements. However, in order to effectively manage them it will take the introduction of other actors and stakeholders in the process. Furthermore, in the identification of indicators, it would be imperative to bear in mind such specific characteristics of the process. An approach such as this would have a number of advantages. First, rather than attempting to come up with a selection of indicators that would try to be relevant in all social reintegration processes, such a modality would allow the development of case-specific indicators. Second, this approach would mean a more targeted method of developing both quantitative and qualitative indicators. By identifying political dynamics and hierarchies as well as overlaps between the macro, meso and micro levels, the use of different type of indicators is likely to be much more targeted and effective. Finally, through the identification of certain elements such as trust, cooperation, communication, community sensitization and political will, the conceptualization of ex-combatant social reintegration in Figure 1 would allow the identification of indicators that are not only specific for different hierarchical levels, but also for different types of interactions between ex-combatants and communities.

Three distinct levels of indicator could be utilized in assessing social reintegration: Activity- or Input-level indicators which seek to identify the resources that have been used in programme implementation, for example, budgets of types of activities; Output- or Result-level indicators which determine, usually quantitatively, short-term results such as the number of former combatants who have passed through vocational training or the number of pre-return sensitization events have been held with recipient communities; and, Outcome- or Impact-level indicators which, through qualitative means, demonstrate broader societal impact such as changes in opinions held by community members towards former combatants or changes in motivation levels of former combatants. Whilst output indicators are crucial for programme management and provide necessary information for the progression of social reintegration, it is arguably outcome or impact indicators that are fundamental for a more nuanced understanding of how social reintegration is progressing and to what extent it has taken root thus far. Additionally, impact indicators of social reintegration enable a better understanding of the shape of society or community as a whole in the post-conflict environment and feed into conflict early warning systems thus facilitating a wider, cross-cutting analysis of the context. Based on these discussions, a selection of indicators is presented in Table 2.

On the other hand, an important issue to consider in the development of Impact-level indicators in Table 2 would be their relevance and robustness. Within the relevance criteria, the indicators need to be specific and measurable. Such clarity would be necessary to avoid ambiguity. For example, in order to
measure social reintegration through the participation of ex-combatants in civic responsibilities such as engagement in community meetings, the quantifiable indicators such as the percentage or number of ex-combatants participating in community meetings would be easier to measure than such qualitative indicators as ‘extent to’, ‘access to’ or ‘quality of’ participation. However, the key question is how feasible is to use such quantifiable indicators in the context of social reintegration when expected achievements are in terms of trust and confidence building? To address this challenge it would be possible to measure ‘change’ among programme beneficiaries. For example, in order to measure the success of social reintegration through ex-combatants’ trust in existing governance and justice mechanisms, the percentage of ex-combatants expressing trust in such institutions or number of ex-combatant related cases resolved through formal justice structures can be used as possible indicators. Similarly, the percentage of ex-combatants as candidates at national and local elections or seats in parliament held by ex-combatants can be other indicators to measure certain aspects of social reintegration. The aggregation of indicators for gender dynamics would also be critical as for example, the above mentioned indicators for male and female ex-combatants would provide a more nuanced understanding of social reintegration taking place (Barnett et al. 2011).

In the development of possible indicators for the measurement of social reintegration another key challenge would likely to be in relation to data robustness. It is essential that data sources, typology and collection actors need to be robust enough for a credible and defendable measurement of social reintegration. However, in a typical conflict-affected environment the challenge of ensuring such prerequisites could simply be impossible to achieve. To start with there is likely to be a poor availability of baseline data due to the impact of protracted armed conflicts on populations and institutions. From the multiple

Table 2. Examples of quantitative and qualitative social reintegration indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose/Outcome</th>
<th>% of ex-combatants who feel they are included as members of their communities (disaggregated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of target population who report positive attitudes to reintegrated ex-combatants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of ex-combatants who see a viable future for themselves without returning to armed forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output</td>
<td># ex-combatants disarmed and demobilized in past 12 months (disaggregated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of ex-combatants able to maintain an independent livelihood and support their families (disaggregated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% ex-combatants who report addressing grievances through non-violent channels, e.g. government or traditional resolution mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># ex-combatants undergoing traditional cleansing or other ceremonies of acceptance into communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of community who do/do not feel threatened by presence of ex-combatants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Barnett et al. (2011).
displacements of people to complete breakdown of data collection processes and physical destruction of public archives, the challenge in identifying or developing baseline data could be enormous. The lack of baseline data can be addressed to some extent by the application of different measurement techniques but this would require the availability of such data sources in the present context. For example, the accessibility to means of livelihoods over a certain period of time could be measured through a household survey targeting ex-combatant headed households. In this case, data source might be considered as available but this would also bring the question of whether or not it is accessible. Here the key question to ask is whether such information can be collected from ex-combatants in which a number of challenges such as physical accessibility in terms of locating such specific households and being able to gain the trust of ex-combatants to answer income-related sensitive questions would be particularly difficult to overcome. In addition to the availability and accessibility, as pointed out above the credibility would also be a key challenge as the reliability of data sources would be a key problem, especially in the context of social reintegration of ex-combatants where trust is a key challenge. Moreover, the issues of trust and confidence in post-conflict context would be such that the use of certain data gathering techniques, i.e. questionnaire surveys, can be problematic, which would have an impact for the trustworthiness of social reintegration measurements. Finally, for the reliability and credibility of measurements, it would be essential to disaggregate the process for different sub-groups within a typical ex-combatant caseload such as female combatants, child soldiers, disabled ex-combatants and those who belong to a particularly minority group (Barnett et al. 2011).

Perhaps a useful starting position when attempting to develop outcome indicators for the social reintegration of ex-combatants is one which considers the merits of utilizing developments in the area of measuring social capital. Arguably implicit linkages have been made between reintegration of ex-combatants, in particular social reintegration, and social capital as the notion of trust represents a central theme to both concepts, along with communication, cooperation and coordination, and it is through observing these themes from the differing perspectives of ex-combatant reintegration and social capital that we can develop our understanding of them in isolation and the way in which they may combine to contribute to the reconciliation and peacebuilding processes. Various empirical studies into social capital have, over the years, contributed to the plethora of different proxy indicators of social capital and with them the debate as to which proxies are most effective and acceptable has raged. Although it is important that the proxy indicators utilized within empirical research are accurate and do in fact furnish us with information pertaining to the level of social capital evident within a group, community, society or nation, when utilizing similar indicators for the social reintegration of former combatants it is clear that some adjustments will be necessary. That said, it is not too far a step to use social capital indicators asking specific questions for the former combatant population. Table 3 demonstrates a number of proxy indicators for
social capital in Rwanda that could be utilized for a more nuanced understanding of the social reintegration of ex-combatants.

The indication, and inference, is that the social reintegration of ex-combatants has a significant influence on social capital restoration. When ex-combatants successfully socially reintegrate they facilitate the (re)establishment of trust, communication, cooperation and coordination in the community thereby acting as a driver for social capital restoration, in particular vertical and bridging social capital. Therefore, a consideration, expansion and refinement of Table 3 in a given context, within the parameters of the criteria for indicators previously identified, would support the development of thinking regarding how to operationalize a more maximalist philosophy in the design and implementation of reintegration programming.
Participatory Research Methods for Social Reintegration Measurement

Research techniques that emphasize an importance of the social reintegration of former combatants will differ according to their purpose—methods or techniques for programme M&E will have a set of specific aims and constraints that contrast to those utilized by academic researchers—and it is important to take into account the nature of the investigation when developing a research framework. That said, social enquiry of either nature, and particularly surrounding sensitive issues such as former combatant social reintegration, is prone to difficulties in the achievement of access, official and emotional (Bowd 2010), in which individuals and organizations may give their formal consent to the gathering of information but do not ‘emotionally’ reveal more delicate indications that enable a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. To this end, techniques that are participatory in nature and implementation are more likely to illicit a finer grade of analysis in both M&E procedures and in academic research.

Participatory research methods have been developed since the 1970s in order to give a voice to marginalized, impoverished and excluded groups in data gathering by development practitioners. In such contexts, similar to the social reintegration of ex-combatants, the power dynamics between community groups would be a key issue for the availability and accessibility of information. Therefore, participatory research methods with such key tenets as ‘participation, teamwork, flexibility and triangulation, make them a valuable set of approaches through which we can better understand communities and therefore design and implement programmes, but that also are locally owned thereby enjoying stronger commitment from these communities’ (Bowd et al. 2010, p. 1).

For example, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which is based on the concepts empowerment, respect, localization, enjoyment and inclusiveness (IISD 1995) can be considered an alternative assessment methodology in social reintegration contexts to more conventional techniques such as various modalities of questionnaire surveys and interviews. As already discussed in earlier sections, the issues of empowerment, respect and inclusiveness would be particularly significant for the post-conflict relationships between ex-combatants and their receiving communities. In spite of their conventional image of instigators of war crimes and atrocities, ex-combatants, particularly such sub-groups as female combatants and child soldiers, are very often faced with a number of socio-economic and political vulnerabilities (Blattman and Annan 2008). Therefore, their direct participation in the sharing and generation of knowledge about their own lives would likely to contribute to their empowerment. By transferring power from the researcher to the researched, ex-combatants would feel respected and valued by the research process. By including such sub-groups as women, children and disabled in ex-combatant caseload, data would be more representative, richer and nuanced.

PRA techniques may include social network mapping, time line variations, institutional diagramming, wealth rankings and division of labour analysis.
The main advantage of these techniques over more conventional M&E methods in the measurement of social reintegration is their flexibility to understand the dynamics and intricacies of relationships between ex-combatants and communities. They can be employed in different with the direct participation of both ex-combatants and other community members, which would be essential for a more nuanced understanding of such phenomena as social capital, kinship relations and indigenous social welfare systems. These techniques are also likely to contribute towards trust and confidence building between the researcher and the researched, which would be essential for an accurate measurement of social reintegration. By increasing the number of techniques to be employed, the PRA methodology would also mean greater availability and accessibility of data sources. ‘Because the nature of participatory methods are to examine present day life, questions of the past do not hold as much emphasis as in other techniques and as such the issues that may arise during these techniques are not as prevalent . . . the primary data derived from participatory techniques is not the only source of data in the process. Body language, the telling of jokes and stories and other events that are socially meaningful tell us something about the dynamics of the society and are as such sources of data’ (Bowd et al. 2010, p. 14).

On the other hand, it is also important to note that the use of PRA techniques in post-conflict environments can also mean a number of challenges. While they are highly effective in dealing with the challenges of mistrust and lack of confidence between different conflict-affected groups, they can cause harm in societal relationships, if implemented haphazardly. The way most PRA techniques are structured the main premise is to understand differences in needs, capacities and aspirations between different groups. For example, wealth ranking exercises are to a large extent about the identification, assessment and examination of differences and divisions in terms of income and livelihoods of different groups such as ex-combatants within a community or social network mapping would be about highlighting marginalization and exclusions of ex-combatants from the community. In other words, there would be a risk of exacerbating the divisions that exist between ex-combatants and community through the application of participatory approaches. Therefore, although PRA techniques would mean a significant potential for a more effective assessment of social reintegration indicators, it should be noted that without a considered and conflict sensitive application they could also worsen existing tensions.

Conclusion

The reintegration of ex-combatants in contemporary DDR programmes tends to be synonymous with the provision of economic opportunities and benefits. Meanwhile, social reintegration is often left to its own course to be addressed through the receiving communities’ own resources and capacities. This is largely because
the social reintegration of ex-combatants is a complex and challenging peacebuilding process and due to its very nature that it would need to take place in a gradual way over a long period of time. Due to its such characteristics that the programmatic peacebuilding approach structured by the liberal peace agenda pays only a lip service to the importance of social reintegration. Rather than dealing with specific challenges of social, political and economic reintegration in a holistic way, DDR programmes would rarely focus on anything else but economic reintegration issues. Therefore, the social reintegration of ex-combatants is an underdeveloped part of the current praxis of DDR. Consequently, most programme indicators used by the international community in the assessment of ex-combatant reintegration are to do with quantifiable economic changes. Furthermore, the objective of identifying quantitative indicators may not be suitable for the assessment of outcomes and outputs that would be expected through social reintegration. Without qualitative indicators it would be difficult to ensure an effective and comprehensive assessment of social reintegration impacts. With such a consideration, this article investigated a nuanced understanding of social reintegration of ex-combatants. By providing such an understanding it is expected that it would be possible to develop appropriate indicators according to the specific characteristics of that particular context. As well as the development of appropriate quantitative and qualitative indicators for ex-combatant social reintegration, another key consideration would be the application of suitable data gathering techniques. Due to the nature of social reintegration processes and overall sensitivities community–combatant contexts, conventional methods of questionnaire surveys and interviews may not be appropriate for the task of measurement. Therefore, in addition to conventional methodologies this article recommended the use of participatory research methods such as PRA techniques in the assessment of social reintegration.

Notes on Contributors

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Notes

1 FMNL: Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front; MNLF: Mindanao National Liberation Front; SPLA: Sudan People’s Liberation Army.
2 The aims or objectives of DDR programmes differ according to the underpinning philosophy of the programme which ‘can be viewed on a continuum: from a minimalist (improving security) to a maximalist (as an opportunity for development and reconstruction) perspective’ (Muggah 2004, p. 27).
3 For a full consideration of this issue see Bowd (2008).

References

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