

5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Sustainable peace is within the grasp of the residents of the eastern DRC. However, the actions of FARDC, particularly with respect to the integration of Congolese armed groups into its ranks, and behaviour of its soldiers will be a central determining factor for this outcome. If the process of integration of armed groups into the government armed forces continue to contribute to desertions by former non-state fighters (who once again become a destabilising force); and if the abusive actions of FARDC soldiers are not curtailed, then an escalation of violence is inevitable.

The military response to foreign armed groups in the eastern DRC, combined with international efforts to restrict the ability of such groups to generate and access income streams, has yielded positive results. Nonetheless, more concerted efforts are required to protect civilians from harm from both members of armed groups and FARDC soldiers. In addition, further demilitarisation of mining areas in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and other areas, is essential.

Despite the implementation challenges of the DDR process and severe limitations of the DRC economy, it appears that a significant number of former combatants in the eastern DRC have been able overcome a key hurdle to reintegration. That is, many demobilised combatants are pursuing stable, civilian livelihoods, relative to the majority of the DRC's economically active population.

The research that was undertaken for this report suggests that the livelihood choices of individual ex-combatants were directly informed by their personal

circumstances, experiences, family responsibilities, skills and livelihoods/income generating experience. The accessibility of individual networks that could be utilised for economic purposes (such as accessing loans, business partners, investors and markets) was a key ingredient to securing sustainable livelihoods.

A remarkable finding of the research was that many ex-combatants had entered into business arrangements with individuals and networks that did not have military backgrounds. Another positive finding was that in some cases, those ex-combatants from armed groups that were previously at war with each other, appeared to be able to work alongside each other relatively peacefully in a range of professions, including artisanal mining, motorcycle taxi driving, small business and fishing.

There seemed to be a correlation between ex-combatants livelihood choice and marital/family status. In many cases, if a male ex-combatant was married and had children, then the livelihood option was often stable and legitimate. A similar dynamic existed for female ex-combatants, particularly those who were unmarried and had to provide for their dependents. In the case of young male ex-combatants, riskier livelihood options were often pursued, such as artisanal mining, mineral smuggling, operating motorcycle taxis, and in some cases, criminal activities.

The manner in which ex-combatants used the reinsertion/reintegration kits provided to them varied. Some used them directly for income generation activities. A significant number sold the kits, with some using the proceeds for short-term consumption, while oth-

ers invested the funds in an economic venture which they determined as being more appropriate to their personal circumstances. It was interesting to note that virtually no reintegration support was provided for certain types of income generating activities that were popular among ex-combatants, such as artisanal mining and motorcycle taxis. Some former combatants employed the skills and expertise acquired from the period of conflict or prior to the conflict to generate an income.

It is noteworthy that ex-combatants often undertook a variety of income generating activities in order to save funds and provide for themselves and their families. In some cases ex-combatants were running multiple

small businesses, usually employing family members to assist. In many cases ex-combatants had sought to improve their socio-economic status by changing and adapting the manner in which they generated an income. For example, some ex-combatants often started working in menial jobs, accumulated savings and then invested in more profitable ventures. There was often a positive, upward spiral process. Given these positive dynamics, it may be possible to advocate that ex-combatants are increasingly becoming implicit agents of peace.

5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations of the research are as follows:

Institution	Recommendations
FARDC & MONUSCO	<p>The existing process of integrating armed groups into the FARDC has not been sustainable with respect to certain armed groups, who have deserted, and then perpetrated human rights abuses against civilian communities. Therefore, it is recommended that FARDC (with the support of MONUSCO) investigate the reasons for the desertions, and then make the appropriate remedial amendments to the process.</p> <p>The reduced FARDC deployment in a number of volatile areas in the eastern DRC, due to internal restructuring, has resulted in civilian populations becoming more vulnerable to violent attacks by armed groups. Therefore, it is recommended that the military reform process be concluded as a matter of urgency, and the appropriate military forces redeployed to key 'hot-spots'.</p> <p>FARDC soldiers have frequently been implicated in human rights violations by DRC residents and human rights watchdogs. Therefore, it is recommended that comprehensive internal processes to hold soldiers to account for their actions, in addition to appropriate disciplinary procedures and actions, be rigorously pursued.</p> <p>It was reported that many ex-combatants still possess firearms and ammunition. Consequently, it is recommended that the feasibility of further disarmament processes be considered.</p>

TDRP, UNDP, MONUSCO & other bodies that provide reintegration support

Given the considerable extent to which ex-combatants sold their reinsertion and reintegration kits, and then used the funds to invest in other unrelated livelihood options, MONUSCO, UNDP and other institutions and organisations associated with designing and delivering the kits, should investigate the practicability of providing ex-combatants with benefits of greater liquidity. This should especially be the case for ex-combatants who do not display a clear aptitude for the training/support provided.

Many ex-combatants have been pursuing livelihood options for which there was no official support and training provided. Examples included artisanal mining and motorcycle taxis. Therefore it is recommended that TDRP, UNDP and other key organisations involved in facilitating reintegration support undertake feasibility studies into the viability and impact of offering support in these two areas.

Numerous ex-combatants have displayed the ability to multi-task in terms of income generation. Therefore it is recommended that the designers and implementers of reintegration consider the possibility of amending reintegration support to more effectively take account this dynamic.

Processes to demilitarise mining areas and legitimise certain mining operations (such as through the OECD/US due diligence exercises) provide extensive opportunities for enhancing the reintegration of those ex-combatants that are engaged in artisanal mining. The TDRP, UNDP and other relevant agencies should investigate how ex-combatant artisanal miners can be encouraged to work in those mining areas that are being demilitarised.

The excessive and bureaucratic nature of taxation, combined with inadequate access to credit, hampers the growth and sustainability of small businesses, including those of ex-combatants. Those involved in the DDR sector should intensify their advocacy for tax relief and incentives for small business development, as well as easier access to credit.

