

Conclusion

This research report has provided insights into the manner in which ex-combatants have interacted with the informal economy in post-war contexts. It has revealed that the viable livelihood options for ex-combatants in the three case-study countries were almost entirely within the informal economy, but were restricted by low levels of human development, extreme poverty and insecurity, which had primarily been brought about through decades of poor governance and a legacy of war. Consequently, the types of reintegration support that was offered to ex-combatants were limited in variety. Some respondents suggested that there were disparities between men and women in the allocation of DDR resources, with men receiving preferential treatment. However, in the absence of sufficient data it was not possible to accurately assess gendered components of DDR.

Nonetheless, DDR material and training support generally assisted the beneficiaries in the three cases studies, both directly and indirectly, to supplement or enhance their livelihoods. However, there were a significant number of incidences where ex-combatants, particularly in the DRC and South Sudan, sold their reinsertion/reintegration kits. In many such instances, the proceeds of the sale of the kits were not squandered on short-term consumption, but were rather used to invest in more appropriate livelihood options for the individuals concerned.

Numerous ex-combatants were resourceful in sustaining themselves economically and/or generating income. The majority of ex-combatants have pursued reputable livelihoods, replicating those individuals who did not have a military background, such as subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, operating small businesses and trading enterprises. There were

some generational differences with respect to livelihood choices. For example, some types of economic activities were clearly popular amongst younger male ex-combatants, such as motorcycle taxis and mining. In the eastern DRC, for example, young male ex-combatants were highly conspicuous in both sectors. Small numbers of former combatants of this generation had also engaged in criminal activities or had been recruited into armed or criminal groups.

Some ex-combatants established cooperatives and joint business ventures, which seemed to have been relatively successful, as such informal sector entities, compared to individual enterprises, had greater access to capital and labour from its members or partners. In some cases, these economic arrangements enabled those associated with the entity to access credit from banks. These arrangements also tended to provide an economic safety net for its members or partners.

Despite the persistence and ingenuity of ex-combatants in pursuing viable livelihoods in the face of adversity, conditions in the local economy severely restricted sustainable economic reintegration. The lack of key infrastructure, and overly bureaucratic and exploitative approach of local authorities were key problem areas. Building and repairing transport infrastructure is essentially a long-term process. However, key domestic economic reforms, such as the professionalization of the tax system, and concerted government support for emerging economic enterprises has the potential not only to be highly beneficial for ex-combatants, but also for ordinary civilians.

Viable livelihood options for ex-combatants in the three countries are almost entirely in the informal economy.

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