

Part 1 – Introducing the study

The Republic of Congo (RoC) has experienced three successive rounds of civil war² and several periods of political violence since 1993. The Pool region was a main theatre of violence in the last two conflicts, and two peace agreements were brokered specifically for this region in 2003 and 2005. Over this period, combat “ended” many times, and several programs and approaches to reintegrating ex-combatants were implemented. The World Bank twice provided assistance to encourage the peace efforts—specifically the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants—once in 2004-2005 under the *Programme de Démobilisation et Réinsertion* (PDR-IDA) funding scheme;³ and again in 2005-2009 through the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) framework⁴, which provided targeted reintegration support to 19,000 self-demobilized ex-combatants.

Despite these efforts, the Pool region remained difficult to access, as it housed Pasteur Ntumi’s armed Ninja Nsilulu movement. Until recently, some localities were prone to power abuse, which led to much insecurity. Staff from the *Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réintégration* (PNDDR) pointed out that many sites were located in a “red zone”⁵ and were therefore still too dangerous to receive reintegration assistance under the MDRP framework.

Once the MDRP program accessed the Pool region in the second half of 2008, 1,679 ex-combatants who had self-demobilized in the preceding years received assistance.⁶

Due to the centrality of the Pool region in the last two conflicts and the continuing insecurity in parts of it, an analysis of the current situation there is necessary to understand the overall state of security in the RoC

1. Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to analyze the extent of reintegration of ex-combatants in the Pool region and to formulate recommendations for potential future action.

While the initial MDRP project had made plans to reach the remaining active combatants in the Pool region (the estimated target was initially set at 5,000), it could not do so during the implementation period due to the volatile political environment. This raised

2 1997, 1998-1999, 2001-2003. The country also experienced conflict in 1993-1994 over parliamentary elections.

3 PDR is a program targeting ex-combatants and funded by the World Bank.

4 MDRP is a multi-donor trust fund funded by both IDA and other donors. The program initially targeted 30,000 individuals: 19,000 “self-demobilized” combatants to be reintegrated, 5,000 individuals still active in the Ninja movement, and 6,000 police and gendarme officers to downsize the Force Publique.

5 The term “red zone” has been used in the Pool region until recently to describe an unstable area out of reach of humanitarian programs.

6 Most came from Kinkala, Ngoma Tsé-Tsé, and the southern districts of Boko and Louingui. 449 received assistance in farming, 515 in small-scale husbandry, 28 in fish pond aquaculture, and 685 in small businesses. Two beneficiaries received support for developing their craft. In the Pool region, assistance was either delivered to groups of individuals or to individuals directly; it eventually resulted in the creation of 554 economic micro-projects.

the question of whether or not a complementary program would be needed to bring closure to armed violence in the Pool region. Were the situational analysis to recommend such an intervention, the report was to formulate recommendations on the form such an initiative should take to have the most impact.

The consulting team evaluated the extent of community acceptance and social reintegration of ex-combatants in twelve localities of the Pool region. This included ex-combatants who had benefited from past reintegration assistance, ex-combatants who had not benefitted from any previous programs, and recruits who presented themselves as still involved in the movement. The team's aim was twofold:

- To gauge the current local security situation, and specifically to determine whether the immediate security context had improved, worsened, or stayed the same in the past 5 years; and
- To determine the extent of intraregional disparities within the Pool region using detailed data collection instruments in several locations, with attention given to the perspectives of both ex-combatants and community members.

2. Methodology

Research team

The research team was composed of one international consultant, who served as the team leader, and three national consultants. The national consultants included an academic, a practitioner with 20 years of experience with marginalized youth and child soldiers, and an experienced humanitarian worker who, as a native of the Pool region, had privileged contacts with the administrative authorities in Kinkala and the local churches.

The team pursued a three-pronged approach when designing the qualitative instruments for data collection. The instruments were designed to gather information about:

- The locality itself;
- Ex-combatants, regardless of whether or not they had received reintegration support; and

- Ex-combatants' income generating activities, regardless whether or not these resulted from external support or included micro-projects funded under the MDRP framework.

Each member of the team was assigned a task, which he or she completed in each of the localities visited. The national consultant who had the most knowledge of the Pool region undertook the focus groups, while the two other national consultants interviewed ex-combatants individually regarding their life stories and their involvement in micro-projects. The international consultant assisted with the focus groups and administered several individual interviews with ex-combatants, investigating their pre- and postwar trajectories and the level of their current socioeconomic reintegration. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with key informants in Brazzaville, including interviews with the National Coordinator of the Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réintégration (PNDDR), senior staff at the Haut Commissariat à la Réinsertion des Ex-Combatants (HCREC), and political representatives of the Conseil National des Républicains (CNR). Pasteur Ntumi, president of the CNR, was also interviewed in Soumona.

This approach maximized the amount of information that could be collected in the field in a limited time frame while still allowing relatively systematic data collection. The bulk of the instruments used for the study can be applied in the future to similar research provided the necessary contextual adjustments are made.

Research instruments

The first component of the research focused on the locality itself. Focus groups were used to gather general and specific information on the locality, including:

- The number of inhabitants before the war;
- The number of inhabitants now;
- The extent of local immigration and emigration;
- Administrative divisions and respective division heads, such as villages, quartiers, and blocs;

- A listing of functioning schools, health centers, and churches;
- Market days;
- Representation of political parties;
- Community projects building or rehabilitating schools or health centers in the past few years by an external agency;
- Main pre- and postwar economic activities;
- The local taxation system;
- Local arrangements for access land;
- Main sources of conflict in the locality;
- Local mechanisms of conflict resolution;
- The effect of the successive waves of violence in the Pool between 1998 and 2011 (year of the study);
- The extent of local armed mobilization;
- The recent history and circumstances of violent events;
- The general perception of the remaining ex-combatants within the community; and
- The community's current challenges and needs (see appendix 4 for the detailed checklist).

Participants in the focus groups included the local leadership, community organizers, health and education professionals, youth, religious leaders, and other key sources of information who were found or recommended during fieldwork. The consulting team conducted a brief presentation on the objectives and process of the evaluation to both the representatives of ex-combatants and the focus group participants together. The ex-combatants were then split from the focus groups to take part in individual interviews. Splitting ex-combatants from focus group participants did not pose a problem during fieldwork. While female ex-combatants were contacted for individual interviews, the overwhelming majority of interviewees were male.

The second component of the research focused on the

life story of ex-combatants before, during, and after their engagement in armed groups in an attempt to understand the socioeconomic choices they had made and the current challenges they faced. This was done through individual interviews⁷ (see appendix 6 for the detailed checklist), which included questions on:

- Their pre-war lives, including their educational and professional trajectories and their relationships with close family and social networks;
- How and where they were recruited and why they joined armed groups;
- Their actions during the war;
- Their demobilization experience, such as whether they had completely severed their links with the armed movement or continued to be involved sporadically;
- The evolution of their socioeconomic situation since demobilization; and
- How they envision their future and options outside armed groups, including their thoughts on the different approaches to reintegration, regardless of whether or not they had taken part in a reintegration project.

The final component of the research consisted of gathering information on ex-combatants' micro-projects, including both micro-projects that had emerged out of spontaneous initiatives (in other words, income generating activities initiated by ex-combatants without external help) and projects that were eventually aided by external assistance (mostly through the ex-combatant reintegration package provided by the PNDDR in 2008 with some assistance from the 2004 IDA-PDR).

Data collected on micro-projects included (see appendix 5 for the detailed checklist):

- Whether it was individual, family-based, or a group activity;
- Whether it comprised ex-combatants only or included other community members,

⁷ One exception was a focus group carried out in Brazzaville and composed of six individuals still active around Ntumi. However, once the focus group was over, each person was eventually approached individually.

- Whether it was a spontaneous grouping or fostered by an NGO;
- The type and amount of input received when externally funded;
- The type and amount of personal or family investment (initial and recurring);
- The training received;
- The similarity between pre- and postwar activity;
- The extent of familial help;
- Any change in group composition over time; and
- General working arrangements, including the distribution of potential benefits.

This component of the research explored the impact of the MDRP initiative on ex-combatants' micro-projects. Meanwhile, efforts were also made to identify externally-funded micro-projects that were set up in the early 2000s as part of earlier targeted reintegration programs to explore their impact and evolution over time.

Fieldwork Locations

Twelve localities, spread across five districts, were chosen in the Pool region according to several criteria (see map 2):

- Localities where PNDDR external reintegration assistance was provided - Kinkala, Boko Center, and Louingui Center
- Localities where PNDDR external reintegration assistance was not directly provided - Loutéhété, Lindzolo, and Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare
- Localities with recent cases of abuse involving Ninja elements - Matoumbou, Missafou, Madzia, and Voula
- Remote localities, which despite being on the Chemin de Fer Congo Océan railroad (CFCO), are isolated and far from a main road - Massembo-Loubaki, Madzia, Ngoma, and Tsé Tsé Gare
- Urban localities - Kinkala and Brazzaville
- Rural localities - This requirement was met by the above localities, which ranged from very small to large villages

- Localities with elements still close to Pasteur Ntumi - Brazzaville and Missafou
- Accessibility - In May 2011, when the study was carried out, the unstable areas of the Pool region had only just been secured. The consulting team was based in Kinkala during the week. Local sites for focus groups and interviews were chosen such that day trips were possible from Kinkala. Localities beyond the town Mindouli were out of range. Mindouli had initially been chosen for a visit, but due to the very bad road conditions (the evaluation occurred at the end of the rainy season), the team could not go further than Loutéhété on the Kinkala-Mindouli axis. The national road was completely blocked by trucks that had been stuck in the mud for several days.

On the advice of the commander of Operation KIMIA⁸ for the Pool region, the consulting team chose to be escorted by a military escort for the trips in the districts of Mindouli (Missafou, Loutéhété, Massembo-Loubaki) and in Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare. The measure was precautionary and only for traveling. The escort did not stay with the team during the data collection.

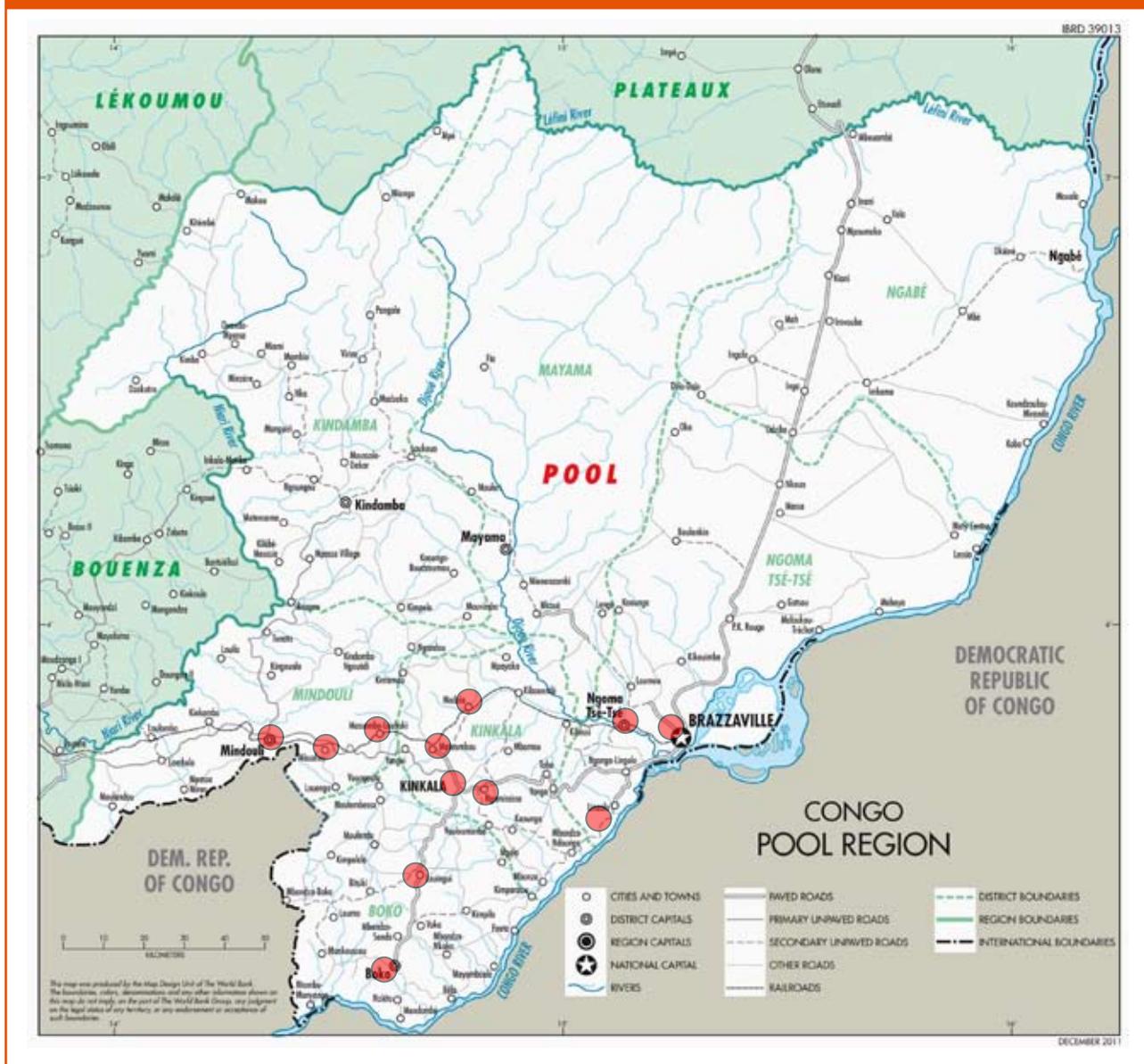
Limitations and mitigation measures

Although the methodology had many strengths, it also had limitations. The second and third components of the research tended to concentrate on a particular category of ex-combatants: those who had already settled and who were either native to the locality or recent immigrants. Ex-combatants that had not formally settled were difficult to approach. We were told that some were still living nearby in the bush, but did not dare to approach the locality since the start of the military operation in the area in November 2010. This challenge was partly mitigated by meeting individuals still close to Ntumi in Brazzaville, as the research team learned that some ex-combatants had come to him for protection after the army was deployed nearby.

Systematic data collection was also uneven, especially

⁸ Operation KIMIA was deployed in the Pool region in October/November 2010 to restore security and the authority of the RoC in the region in order to pave the way for the reinstallation of the public security forces and the administrative authorities. More details on military Operation KIMIA are given below, in the section highlighting the RoC military response from 2010 onwards.

Map 2. Republic of Congo. Pool Region.
The red circles represent the localities visited.



within the individual interviews, and not all points in the checklist were explored in depth. Nevertheless, the data collection yielded interesting interview fragments that are used in this report to illustrate points and claims.

Another limitation was spatial. The Pool region consists of 13 districts; however, the field team was only able to conduct fieldwork in twelve locations spread across five districts: Kinkala, Mindouli, Ngoma Tsé Tsé, Boko, and Louinguï. To mitigate the effects of spatial limitation, the consulting team paid attention

to target localities known to have hosted Ninja bases until recently, as well as localities where cases of abuses were reported.

The study might have been enhanced if localities in the districts of Mayama, Kindamba, and Vinza had been included. These northern districts of the Pool are more remote and not on the railroad. They are also known to have been starting points of the insurgency, and Ntumi still seems to have some influence there. During our encounter with Pasteur Ntumi in Soumona, he reported owning land in the district

of Vinza, where he grows a strain of cassava that is more resistant to environmental hazards. Many of the people who live close to him in Soumona work on his plantation. These districts were not included in the assessment because of the accessibility concerns discussed above.

3. Report Structure

The report is divided into six sections. Part 1 introduces the study, stressing the rationale and objectives of the analysis and describing the research approach and methodology. Part 2 provides contextual information on the changing dynamics of the Ninja move-

ment and describes how the movement shifted from armed movement to political party over the years. Part 3 adds broader context by presenting the evolution of the security situation in the Pool region and by illustrating significant intraregional disparities. Part 4 examines the current situation of ex-combatants in the Pool region with a focus on how they fit into their local environment. Part 5 reflects on past disarmament and reintegration initiatives in the region and extracts their core approach. Finally, Part 6 concludes by formulating an intervention strategy for the Pool region, drawing on the main findings of the recent fieldwork and on the lessons learned from past interventions.