

# Part 6 – Recommendations for a strategic intervention

## 1. Summary of key points

One of the main characteristics of the Pool region over the last thirteen years (with the exception of a few localities) has been the dearth of public security forces. This often led to abuse, especially since Ninja bases led by free-riding elements persisted in some areas until recently. These residual bases posed a number of threats to the local population, including forced labor, excessive taxation and extortion, torture, and unauthorized exploitation of land.

The different phases of warfare affected the localities visited very differently. In particular, the southern districts have been relatively calm for the past eight years, except along the railroad, where cases of abuse were reported until 2011.

It is only recently that the national army, with Operations KINZOUNOU and KIMIA, has reentered the Pool region to secure the area and reinstitute a formal judicial system. The operations were well received by the civilian populations and have been a success in dismantling the remaining Ninja bases.

Ex-combatants are not a homogeneous group and face different reintegration needs depending on individual characteristics. Those who are from the locality where they were posted are usually accepted by the community. Conversely, outsiders are more likely to be rejected (for example in Voula and Matoumbou.) The individuals who self-demobilized many years ago have generally developed coping mechanisms. Ex-combatants not yet settled face the problem of lack of housing. The ones who own agricultural land do not

have to bear the rental cost of an agricultural plot. The typology developed for this study helps to put the different profiles into perspective by illustrating the diversity of ex-combatants' individual backgrounds (see part 3, section 1- A diversity of profiles).

Generally, the ex-combatants interviewed during fieldwork had engaged in economic activities, which resembled the activities of the population at large. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, they were generally no better or worse off than non-combatants.

Although an internalized culture of patronage to Ntumi remains, the resumption of war is highly unlikely. There have been many self-demobilizations in the past decade, and some of high-ranking ex-Ninja commanders were offered administrative and military positions. The political context is also not what it was in the late 1990s, when many Ninjas who fought in 1993 felt obliged to rejoin the fight for fear of violent retaliation. To date there is no opposition in the country capable of challenging the power of the current President; hence, the state has little incentive to hunt down an already weak opposition.

Some individuals continue to be involved in petty crime; however, they remain a minority. There are cases of coupeur de route (bandits attacking cars and trucks), but this has been infrequent since the deployment of the national army. One can only hope that when the military operation eventually ends, public representatives of the security forces—the gendarmerie and police—will be ready to absorb those duties.

The perception that ex-combatants were receiving a disproportionate share or support in comparison with other community members was present in several locations.

## 2. General recommendations

While the initial MDRP-RCERP project had made plans to reach active or formerly active ex-combatants in the Pool region (the estimated target was 5,000), the bulk of potential beneficiaries could not be reached during the implementation period due to the volatile political and security environment. This situation has raised the question of whether or not a complementary program could help bring a true closure to armed violence in the Pool region.

The Pool region has been adversely affected by warfare. The effects on the local economy continue to be visible today, hampering an economic reintegration solely based on endogenous processes.

Given the recent government initiatives to disarm former combatants and restore security in the Pool region—the two cash-for-weapons operations of 2009 and 2011 and the launch of Operation KINZOUNOU and KIMIA in 2010—and the wide participation of ex-combatants in these operations, it is recommended that the final disarmament operations are coupled with a reintegration component to accompany the current efforts of the State and to provide closure to the war-affected populations.

However, since it appears that ex-combatants are economically no better or worse off than the population at large, the approach should not be targeted exclusively towards ex-combatants. Assistance should target the youth in general, including ex-combatants but not limited to them, with a special focus on locations known to have recently hosted armed-group bases.

The general approach should be inspired by community-driven reconstruction programming, combining the decision-making and fiscal empowerment of decentralized institutions of government—that is, Mairies and Conseil Général du Pool (the town and district councils)—with participation of the local populations in questions related to program planning and implementation.

To ensure that this recommended approach can be

implemented in the Pool region and that sufficient security is maintained, it is strongly recommended that the State is supported in its current activities to restore security and public order in the region. Assistance to the building and rehabilitation of public infrastructure to reinstall the gendarmerie and police stations has been absent in most localities of the Pool region since 1998; it is therefore recommended that this be available to avoid a gap between the end of Operation KIMIA and the redeployment of public security forces in the Pool region.

## 3. Recommended actions

- Reenergize the local economic situation and encourage economic opportunities in the Pool region as it rebuilds from the devastation of war (see appendix 3 for an overview of the pre-war and current economic sectors of the Pool region): it was clear from several focus groups that the war had destroyed important sectors of the local economy. Medium-scale agriculture and animal husbandry are particularly in need of productive investment. In Boko and Louingui, the Union des Producteurs de Fruits, which was a dynamic association of medium-scale tropical fruit plantations before the war, has not been reactivated since 2002. Doing so may be an initiative worth exploring, as individuals have not stopped growing tropical fruits, but their efforts remain small-scale, and fruits are usually grown on plots within the living compound. Local ranches—ox farms of more than 100 animals—were also completely destroyed during the successive wars. In the visited localities of Missafou and Massembo Loubaki, it was reported that large- and medium-size private farms had been looted and the cows had been eaten. The same goes for fish farming. Because of the lack of local supply, most animals are purchased from the DRC. Intervention should therefore combine support to individual farmers with support to larger farms and fishing centers, in collaboration with the Direction Départementale d'Agriculture and private medium-scale farm owners, in order to reintroduce large-scale ox and fish breeding in the area.

- Explore the possibility of equipment rental in the region: All the communities interviewed were eager to rent motorized cultivators. Unfortunately, there is currently no supply of motorized agricultural equipment in the Pool region. This might be worth exploring in collaboration with the Direction Départementale d'Agriculture at the district level and with the local churches at the local level.
- Explore ways to provide micro-credit to beneficiaries: The lack of dynamic economic sectors—exacerbated by the successive wars, enduring insecurity, and the continued isolation of the region—have all led to the population in the Pool becoming poorer and a serious lack of cash and credit for small and medium business investment. There is evidence that part of the unmonitored cash received during the cash-for-weapons program was used for reintegration purposes, and there are noted flaws of using intermediaries between the direct beneficiaries of assistance and the support institution. Therefore, the intervention should explore possibility of providing substantial credit schemes in one unique installment directly to beneficiaries to avoid repeating the operational flaws of the MDRP program. Given the local preference for working individually, proposals coming from individuals, family heads acting on behalf of the close family, and groups should be considered.
- Enhance agricultural trade by improving roads: Another challenge related to the reintegration of ex-combatants relates to the dynamics of local markets. The Pool region has extremely poor quality roads, very remote villages, and uneven accessibility for transporting products to market. A previous MDRP evaluation in 2003, Reintegration where there are no roads, electricity or water?, had already brought these points to the fore. It suggested undertaking parallel investments in strategic road infrastructure to facilitate the transportation of agricultural products and to boost the local economy. A key recommendation is to help connect the district of Mindouli to Kinkala by investing in roads between the two areas. Such road improvements would have a significant positive impact on the local economy and might even foster the return of some of the displaced population to their pre-war homes.
- Enhance literacy and promote vocational training: Many youth who joined the Ninja movements at a young age and stayed with them for many years do not know how to read or write. Therefore, in terms of education, the focus should be placed on literacy classes for out-of-school youth, a request made on several occasions by the community assemblies. Technical and vocational training should also be promoted, the latter including access to subsequent micro-credit at the end of the course to enable the participant to start a business or begin working using their new skills, whether individually, in families, or in groups.
- Target the areas close to the railroad network: Geographically, the intervention should target areas close to the railroad network in the districts of Kinkala and Mindouli, especially the localities hosting train stations, since those have been the areas particularly prone to abuse during the period of fixed Ninja bases. The districts of Kindamba, Mayama, and Vinza should also be covered by the program, since these districts are known to be where the insurgency started and where Pasteur Ntumi is reported to maintain socioeconomic links.<sup>50</sup>
- Improve the housing situation in these districts: With the displacement of populations due to warfare and the burning down of many houses, several localities in these areas still have fewer inhabitants than before the war. Housing was also cited many times as a problem for non-settled combatants.
- Target the community at large: Interventions, including those for housing, which is generally a regional issue, should not focus solely

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<sup>50</sup> In the district of Vinza, he owns land, grows a strain of cassava more resistant to environmental hazards, and uses many of the people who live close to him in Soumona to travel there and work in his plantation).

on ex-combatants. Funding should preferably be channelled through churches, long-lasting ministries, local decentralized state institutions (such as sous-préfectures), and the Direction départementale d'Agriculture rather than through temporary institutions such as

HCREC, PNDDR, and NGOs that are not based in the area of intervention. This recommendation is all the more relevant since many PNDDR and HCREC staff have already been moved elsewhere and are now posted in other administrative institutions.

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