

Migration of Ex-Combatants in Uganda



Kampala shantytown and high-rise flats

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted to provide a better understanding of mobility and migration among ex-combatants in Uganda for DDR policy makers and service providers. To accomplish this, the study delved into the factors impacting the migration decisions of 121 reporters who had migrated in five regions of Uganda. The study focused special attention on social factors both within communities of origin and new communities of re-settlement to uncover some of the lesser-discussed factors driving migration for this particular population.

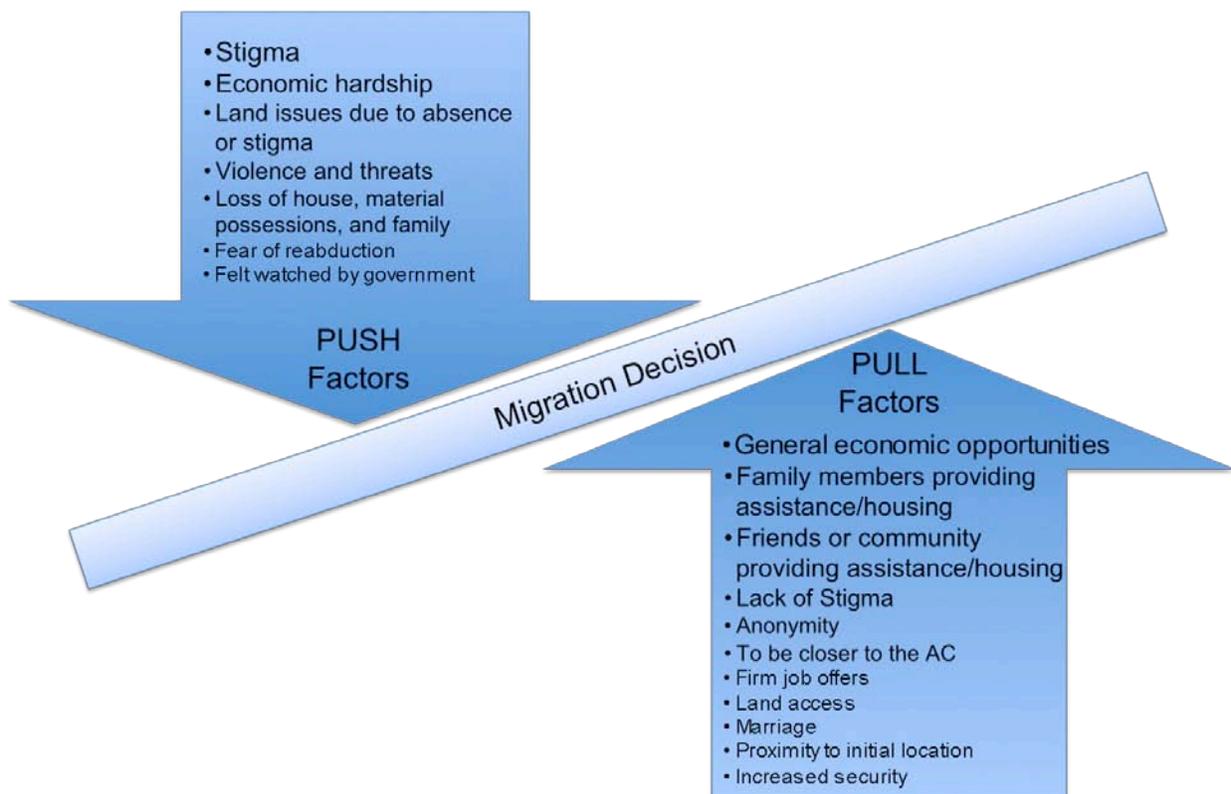
The study's objectives were:

1. To analyze push/ pull migration factors of ex-combatants in Uganda, with a specific focus on social as well as economic factors both within communities of origin and at new communities of re-settlement.
2. To explore any impact of DDR programming on migration of ex-combatants in Uganda.
3. To increase the understanding of the impact of migration by ex-combatants on the effectiveness of past and current DDR programming, specifically on reintegration efforts.
4. To generate recommendations on how to improve DDR programming, taking into account findings from other related studies.

5.1 Summary of findings

Recognizing the challenges facing the general population in Uganda and that migration has played an integral role in Uganda's history, we targeted areas of divergence among ex-combatants and non-combatants and focused our analysis on those determinants unique to the ex-combatant experience. The first objective of the research was to analyze the push/pull migration factors of this group and through this analysis, social, economic and intrinsically intertwined socio-economic patterns emerged. We found that the causes of mobility that are unique to reporters stem primarily from official and unofficial DDR practices and procedures, stigma or fear due to former and present affiliation with rebel groups, extended rebellion-driven absence from communities of origin, diminished opportunities due to interrupted life trajectories, influential and extensive ex-combatant networks, and the evolution of attitudes toward acceptance and reconciliation in Ugandan society over time. Economic rationales, land issues and marriage were primary causes of migration that were not unique to reporters but were exacerbated by their former rebel status. Rebel group, sex and age further delineated migration experiences.

Figure 1- Major push and pull factors for Ugandan ex-combatant migrants



5.1a Former rebel affiliation

Normative culture and DDR design elements have in many ways imposed an invisible badge communicating rebel group affiliation, which can be extremely difficult for reporters to shed. Ex-combatants in Uganda face stigma that has a noticeable impact on factors for migration. Stigma has frequently manifested itself in less employment opportunities due to fear or anger by potential employers, increased tension over land usage and rights, and decreased likelihood of marriage or normal family relationships in reporters' communities of origin. For land issues, it is unclear if land scarcity has caused families and communities to use former rebel status as an excuse not to share the land upon the reporter's return, or if the stigma from involvement in rebel groups alone causes the issues that reporters are currently experiencing. For some interviewees, this stigma was immediately apparent while for others it compounded over time until the individual reached a personal breaking point.

Many ex-combatant women have been forced to leave their communities as they are no longer seen as fit wives after their time spent in rebel groups or after having children either out of wedlock or through forced bush-marriages. While it is common for Ugandan women to move for marriage to other communities, many ex-combatant women have found themselves looking outside the traditional networks to find a husband as well as moving to locations where they could anonymously start a new life. This suppression of one's past appeared to be most common among women, though also present among some male interviewees as well.

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Additionally, many interviewees faced a real threat of re-abduction or severe punishment and even death for family or community members if found by their rebel group, which deeply impacted social and personal relationships. Prior to the Amnesty Act and until peace agreements between their rebel group and the government were achieved, other reporters faced punishment if found by the government. These concerns have frequently led such individuals to choose or be pressured into leaving their communities to preserve the safety and security of their family, neighbors and themselves.

It is important to highlight that for some reporters their actions or affiliation with a rebel group made it virtually impossible to return home, requiring them to migrate. Interviewees in this category attributed the inability to return to actions they committed in their community of origin during the fighting or holding a high-ranking position in their rebel group.

Larger cities, particularly Kampala, were found to be especially attractive destinations to those seeking anonymity. Due to the large numbers of non-combatant Ugandans migrating for economic reasons, it has been possible for ex-combatants to move and start a new life without any mention of their ex-combatant status. Stigma also appeared to drive ex-combatants in Uganda to seek out communities in which they felt they would be far less victimized by discrimination or stigmatization such as urban areas and communities less exposed to the fighting. Interviewees also reported being drawn to communities where there are others like them and they do not feel the need to hide their past or be fearful. In this sense, stigma was found to affect not only why one left their community but also where they decided to go next.

Factors such as bad memory associations with their home, community or local environment and long term injuries impacting their ability to do certain work (often including farming or physical work) were also found to impact migration decisions of the reporters.

5.1b Extended absence

Ex-combatants were frequently gone for upwards of a decade, thus it was not surprising that many of the challenges currently faced by interviewees resulted from their extended absence apart from any stigma or mal-intent. Lost years of work experience, employment income or experience in subsistence agriculture and education (depending on age joined) appear to significantly diminish the number of current opportunities available to ex-combatants. Meanwhile, the grabbing or selling of land due to either extended absence or assumed death was frequent. Ex-combatants generally returned to their home communities with nothing, forcing these individuals to start over. Common among older ex-combatants appears to have been the loss of all material possessions including their house and often any documentation regarding their ownership or rights to land as a result of their extended absences. In war-affected areas of Uganda, particularly those which have hosted IDP camps, both ex-combatants and non-combatants have shared such challenges. In many locations, however, destruction of property has been a challenge specific to individuals with rebel group associations, as houses of known rebels have been targeted either by community members who remained behind or by government security forces. Furthermore, other ex-combatants have returned after long periods of time away to find that their entire family had died due to violence or illness and that their spouse had remarried or moved away.

5.1c Opportunity knocks lightly

While push factors largely appear to drive reporter decisions to migrate, even the smallest window of opportunity in another location frequently proves intensely attractive in the Ugandan economic context. The majority of interviewees who moved for this purpose did so based on a perception or expectation of

employment. In the case of Kampala, many were recruited to the area by a specific job offer from a security firm or in rare cases other industries. Security firms require experience with weapons making this a niche market specific to former combatants. It is notable that some interviewees chose not to take these positions due to a desire to distance themselves from anything militarized.

Other potential opportunities reported were access to workable land, marriage offers and the presence of infrastructure, services and institutions. A few people moved due to the existence of additional education or skills building offered by NGOs, the Amnesty Commission or others in district centers. As mentioned previously, several interviewees also reported moving to be close to the Amnesty Commission headquarters in Kampala in the event that additional funds or services would be made available. Superior health facilities also drew a small number of ex-combatants.

Education was mentioned in the literature as a possible draw, but our research did not find personal education-related opportunities to be a significant pull factor for migration among reporters in Uganda. However, education opportunities for reporters' children, such as subsidized school-related fees or superior schools, were found to be powerful reasons for remaining in an otherwise unacceptable situation in a particular community.

For particularly desperate or resource-deprived interviewees, proximity was found to be the ultimate deciding factor drawing such individuals away from their communities. The lowest cost option is often walking and some interviewees reported moving to their current community for no other reason than that it was close enough to walk to but far enough distanced to achieve anonymity, escape memory triggers, etc.

5.1d Networks

Our research found the presence of various types of networks working not only as a facilitator of migration, but also leading to significant pull factors and greatly impacting the current experience in that destination. Previously established networks included family, former colleagues from the rebel group or friends known through other connections such as school friends, former neighbors, etc. Most frequently in these cases family or friends provided initial housing, which made the destination a viable option. Others were made aware of job opportunities through these networks or even offered a job by that friend, neighbor, etc. Such networks also frequently provide economic assistance and social support that significantly benefits the ex-combatants.

It is important to note, however, that not all migrant reporters had a network to facilitate their move and many moved to their new destination without knowing a soul. Generally in these cases they had no alternatives and were able to eventually receive assistance in their new community from someone who shares their religion, tribe, language, etc. Many interviewees also referenced moving in the hope that they would be able to find and receive assistance from religious, regional (often determined by tribal language), or former rebel colleague networks once arriving at their destination. Large mosques and churches in Kampala are widely known to provide assistance to those in need, as are 'Good Samaritans' in mosques and churches throughout the country. Reporter networks provided housing, informal employment opportunities and new friendships particularly for men in Kampala and Arua. The West Nile groups have formed associations to formalize this assistance. The type of network a reporter accessed generally differed by rebel group, with ADF reporters frequently reaching out to the Islamic community and sometimes former ADF colleagues, LRA frequently connecting to friends from school or home and Christian churches, and WNB and UNRF II reaching out to former colleagues and mosques. Many of these networks are not reporter-specific and therein enable the individuals to participate and receive

assistance anonymously, operating as an average citizen and thereby encouraging reintegration both economically and socially.

5.1e A decade of amnesty

Since the passage of the Amnesty Act and the formation of the Amnesty Commission in 2000, there has been significant progress made toward peace and reconciliation and the acceptance of ex-combatants in families and communities. In this time period, many of the factors that initially pushed ex-combatants to flee their communities have since dissipated, particularly those related to security and fear. This evolution in the social landscape of Uganda has opened up new possibilities for ex-combatants who formerly harbored no reasonable hope of return and may have major implications for migration in the years to come.

5.1f Differentiated experiences by group

Furthermore, our research found that trends in migration experiences largely varied along the lines of rebel group, sex and age.

Rebel group, which was found to be closely tied to regional origin and ethnic group, was associated with level of stigma, type of land issues, current age, education level, number of children, psychological issues, demobilization type (e.g. reception center, prison, etc.), and degree of fear of the government. The level of stigma differed dramatically among rebel group, depending on the degree of exposure to violence and impact on one's home community from violent acts committed by that group, the level of effort put into peace and reconciliation by ethnic group/ origin, the type of recruitment (voluntary or through abduction) and the age when joined or abducted. The extent to which non-combatants already migrate in a given region also appeared to impact on reporter migration in certain rebel groups.

Experiences among male and female reporters also appeared to vary significantly. As a result of Ugandan societal expectations, women seemed more likely to have moved due to stigma than men. Overall, stigma was found to be much greater for women in many communities and particularly for women bringing children back from the bush. Female reporters who had children prior to being with the rebel group often experienced intense feelings of anger and outrage from the community upon their return for unexpectedly leaving neighbors and family to care for the children. Additionally, women were more likely to move for marriage or be attracted to skills training while men tended to move for the prospect of finding work.

Age is a factor that was less explored in this research as it was limited to individuals over the age of 18. Nonetheless, the age of the reporter appeared to impact migration experiences, as older reporters appeared to move for reasons related to livelihood, housing, and to provide for dependents while younger reporters tended to move for education or training opportunities, or because they were too young to effectively exercise any decision of their own regarding migration.

5.2 DDR practices and procedures impacting migration

Through the exploration of push and pull migration factors, the research also informed the second objective of the study: to explore any impact of DDR programming on migration of ex-combatants in Uganda. Official and unofficial practices and procedures in the DDR process were found, for better or worse, to have a considerable impact on migration among the reporters interviewed.

Ex-combatants who transited through reception centers were not given the choice by officials as to which community they would be returned to upon reinsertion. As a result, many reporters were returned to cities, towns and villages in which they were certain to face extreme hardship and failed reintegration, in most cases increasing community tensions and forcing these individuals to endure a tortuous process of return, sometimes for several years, before ultimately uprooting themselves and their families to struggle to begin anew in another destination.

In several reported instances, ex-combatants were lured out of the bush on exaggerated or even false promises related to services and benefits that would be provided to them upon returning to their communities. Many reporters agreed to return to their communities of origin under the assumption that they would receive a resettlement package which was described as including a house, iron sheets for a new roof, land, training, schools for their children, and more. And indeed, there appears to be some confusion within the AC, as staff sometimes call the package given to all reporters the “resettlement package,” while other times it is called the “reinsertion package.” Reporters, however, make a very clear distinction between these two terms and continue to voice anger and frustration for having never received a “resettlement package”. According to interviewees, this was conveyed to ex-combatants by the army, by Amnesty Commission officials and by GMAC and possibly other reception centers. Additionally, interviewees reported that upon receiving the reinsertion package many were specifically told that there would be “more” to follow. This additional assistance never materialized, forcing many of these individuals to migrate elsewhere in Uganda or abroad in search of land and livelihoods.

The Amnesty Commission has become synonymous with assistance in reporter circles and Commission offices continue to be a considerable draw for reporters seeking advocacy and support. The central office in Kampala in particular appears to have become a destination for reporters believing that additional monetary assistance is forthcoming and that those nearest to the Kampala office will be the lucky few to first receive any new benefit. However, anecdotal evidence gathered from conversations with AC officials indicates that assistance is extremely unlikely to manifest itself in this way into the foreseeable future. Yet, there has been no visible, serious effort by the AC to communicate the contrary, and consequently, reporters continue to migrate to and remain in Kampala primarily for this reason.

5.3 Conclusions

Following the passage of the Amnesty Act in 2000, word traveled across Uganda and deep into the bushlands of neighboring DRC and Sudan that the government was seeking a peaceful solution to decades-old conflicts. In response rebels laid down their weapons and peacefully reported to representatives of their former adversary, the Ugandan government, in numbers not previously witnessed in Ugandan history. While the Amnesty Act provided for various protections for reporters, these returning individuals would face enormous challenges in the process of reintegrating into Ugandan civilian society. Non-combatant civilians during this time also faced enormous challenges as many of their lives had been deeply affected by the fighting, forcing countless individuals into leading lives of unimaginable fear and desperation, burying scores of friends and family members, and ultimately fleeing their homes for the relative safety of IDP camps, town centers, and unaffected neighboring districts. Still, the severity of challenges faced by ex-combatants returning from the bush, most of whom had been victims themselves of abduction, violence, and profound loss, frequently far exceeded that of their civilian counterparts, further fueling the necessity to migrate.

The ultimate goal of the DDR process is to bring an end to fighting through the successful reintegration of former combatants back into society as civilians. The DDR approach deployed in countries like Uganda generally assumes reintegration back into communities of origin, and the Uganda program was designed and implemented to reflect the prevailing wisdom that ex-combatants fare better returning to where their abduction or recruitment originally occurred. But what happens when an individual is given no choice but to be returned to all but certain resentment, hatred or even violence? What happens when one reporter is returned to a community, which offers training and economic opportunities for reporters, but her close confidant is returned to a community which offers none of these? How can splitting up married couples based on community of origin improve the husband and wife's respective reintegration outlooks? The result, we found, is re-traumatization, non-integration, and often immediate or eventual migration.

Our research confirms that there is indeed movement among Ugandan ex-combatants, which appears to be driven in large part by factors both unique and directly linked to association and time spent with rebel groups. Common sense leads us to believe that this is not at all surprising, nor unique to the Ugandan context. And in fact the 2002-03 Uganda National Household Survey recorded that half of Uganda's heads of household had migrated from their birthplace, and 44% of heads of household living in rural Uganda had migrated at least once (World Bank, 2006). This is staggering in migration terms, but what is perhaps even more staggering is that, in a country in which migration has played a profound role in shaping the social landscape for decades, the DDR strategy deployed in Uganda failed at every visible step in the process to account for migration of ex-combatants. This oversight in DDR planning and implementation has led to an increase in needless migration amongst ex-combatants, impeded successful long-term reintegration, and even exacerbated challenges, elevated risks, and increased vulnerability amongst this population. The following conclusions are presented to increase the understanding of the impact of migration by ex-combatants on the effectiveness of past and current DDR programming, specifically on reintegration efforts.

5.3a DDR aspects which exacerbate existing challenges and elevate risks and vulnerability

In addition to the challenges being faced daily by the general population in Uganda, the majority of reporters encountered additional hardship upon returning from the bush as a consequence of their time spent with rebel groups. The degree of hardship faced by these individuals, however, appears to have been exacerbated to some degree by misguided elements of the DDR approach to assisting reporters in Uganda, inducing further migration.

Frequently, adult reporters made the decision to leave the bush after many years away and return home based on an understanding that they would receive land and a house, in addition to the standard reinsertion package. However, reporters eventually began to face the realization that a house and land might never materialize, which fueled deep resentment toward the GoU, sparking fierce debate among affected reporters over whether demobilization had been for the best and ultimately forcing many to leave the community of their birth in search of any livelihood that might help surmount being a middle-aged ex-combatant having but two skills -- farming and fighting -- and having neither farmland nor a fighting cause. With added consideration for migration implications in future DDR planning, exacerbation of reintegration challenges for these individuals may well be avoided.

For younger reporters who were largely demobilized through reception centers, pondering whether or not demobilization was the right path was likely much less pervasive, given that the vast majority of these individuals had been abducted at an early age and wished for nothing more than to be returned to

family and friends. For the majority of younger reporters, being returned “home” was undoubtedly the best strategy for long-term reintegration, for this is generally where the young reporter’s remaining family, strongest social networks and positive memories prior to abduction exist. For far too many reporters though, “home” is not associated with either of these things, and often such individuals are well aware of this before being sent back. Frequently, the situation at home had been bad before joining the rebellion, which in part may have led older youths to volunteer in the first place. Some of these children and youth combatants had been forced to commit atrocities in their home communities, which in some instances made resettlement impossible. Still other times, returning reporters were faced with the prospect of trying to reintegrate into a community in which their entire family has been killed, wants nothing to do with the reporter, or wants nothing more than to take advantage of his/her reinsertion package and extreme vulnerability. We do recognize, however, that in some cases in which a desire to be sent elsewhere is communicated, returning a particular individual to their community of origin may be the most appropriate measure, especially in cases of young children who might be scared of the implications of leaving the only world they know for an unknown and uncertain future with family members. It is also likely that some reporters may elect to be sent to some other place for no reason but that it is a place they had always wanted to move to such as Kampala or Nairobi, which certainly has the potential to draw resentment from average citizens who might similarly like assistance in moving. Undoubtedly, careful discretion should be exercised in considering motives and the benefits of communities of origin should be matched against the best alternative. Yet, outside of the realm of family tracing, the DDR approach in Uganda did not allow for the level of flexibility required by the situation, resulting in painful social and psychological consequences and migration implications for numerous individuals. With added consideration for migration implications in future DDR planning, exacerbation of reintegration challenges for this sizeable group of individuals may well be avoided.

Furthermore, reporters of all ages continue to come to Kampala in the hope of being the first to receive forthcoming benefits for reporters. While future benefits for reporters materializing in such a manner seems highly unlikely, this has not been successfully communicated to reporters throughout the country, nor does there appear to be any existing attempt to convincingly inform them of this once they have reached the central office and continue to wait. This may be attributed in large part to the AC’s hope of receiving additional resources themselves or not wishing to inflame tension and feelings of resentment among groups of reporters. While this is completely understandable, it is clear that current and future AC resources will continue to be distributed among reporters via referral services, advocacy, and skills training and not in monetary form as many of the individuals waiting expect will happen. Again, with added consideration for migration implications in future DDR planning, exacerbation of reintegration challenges for these individuals may well be avoided.

5.3b DDR aspects which impede successful reintegration of migrating reporters

Lack of consideration for migration in DDR planning and implementation also impacted service provision for reporters in Uganda, stifling or even impeding successful long-term reintegration for many individuals. At a minimum this resulted in missed service opportunities.

DDR in Uganda did not appear to account for the level of fluidity inherent in the reintegration process, but rather operated under the assumption that reporters would be returned home, support would be provided at that location, and individuals would eventually re-assimilate into their communities. Programming did not seem to take into account the fact that Ugandans in general migrate for a variety of reasons, and as such, reporters would migrate to a considerable extent too. As situations change over time, reasons for migration change as well. A reporter’s high level of social reintegration into one community may be offset by a very low level of economic reintegration which ultimately compels the

individual to migrate. Our research gave no indication that past reintegration positively determines future integration into a new community, as several reporters who encountered few social challenges in returning home encountered new challenges related to their time with a rebel group upon migrating. Yet, there were few services and little support to assist such individuals beyond ultra-limited resourced CFPs. Furthermore, as the reconciliation and security situation in communities across Uganda improves, reporters who have migrated are increasingly looking at opportunities to return to their communities of origin, but there is little in terms of services and support to assist these individuals in making a move that may dramatically improve their chances of reintegration.

The deficiencies in DDR mentioned in the previous paragraph may largely be attributed to the lack of a viable nationwide mechanism for tracking reporters as they migrate from one community to the next. And indeed, tracking individuals from one community to the next would present many challenges. The lack of resources, technology and manpower in rural communities is an obvious one, but a tracking program would also need to take into account the negative implications of such a mechanism for the reporters themselves. Many reporters strongly wish to forget a particularly dark period in their lives, rejecting any intervention that reinforces their identity as a former rebel and preferring to have as little interaction with the national government as possible, and indeed interviewees allege that scores of ex-combatants have not yet reported to the AC for these reasons.

Also considerably worth noting is the overall neglect of female reporters' significantly elevated likelihood of migration due to severe stigma. Numerous responses from both men and women made it unquestionably clear that female reporters on average faced far more stigma-related challenges than their male counterparts, and in fact a large percentage of the female sample attributed their migration primarily to issues related to stigmatization. Yet there has been no official DDR mechanism set forth to address female-specific issues, and as a result, potentially unnecessary migration and additional reintegration-related hardship has occurred.

5.3c Successes

While our research did find significant room for improvement for future DDR, there were obvious successes as well. Official DDR programming in Uganda has assisted numerous ex-combatants in successful reintegration in their communities by providing much needed support and advocacy, most notably in the areas of peace and reconciliation dialogue, enforcement of the Amnesty Act's anti-recrimination and anti-discrimination statutes, and legal representation in discrimination-related land grabbing cases. In addition, family tracing and reunification efforts were found to be very successful in Uganda garnering much praise from reporters and DDR service providers and advocates. Furthermore, the Amnesty Commission achieved a degree of coordination and partnership that greatly facilitated reintegration of reporters and allowed the AC to accomplish far more with less and stretch their resources virtually to the limits.

5.4 Recommendations

The fourth objective of this study was to further inform DDR policy and practice through recommendations on how to improve DDR programming, taking into account findings from other related studies. DDR programming has to date ignored some of the realities of reintegration and the distinct possibility of migration by ex-combatants. In some cases this resulted in lost opportunities and at times even exacerbated migration for this group. To address this oversight, future DDR policy and programming should consider employing a three-pronged approach to account for migration. First, the

development community needs to change the way it thinks about reinsertion and reintegration. The ingrained mantra that an ex-combatant must necessarily be returned to his/her community of origin should be reassessed. Second, DDR programming should include an awareness of the causes of migration and a strategy to respond to migration of ex-combatants. This strategy should be incorporated into planning on reinsertion and reintegration. Finally, supporting reporters who desire to stay in their communities as well as those who wish to return to their communities is an important step toward ensuring full reintegration of all ex-combatants.

5.4a Rethink DDR assumption that all reporters must return to their community of origin

In addition to a frequent assumption by the DDR community that ex-combatants will go home and stay there, it is also frequently assumed in the reinsertion process that returning reporters to their community of origin will necessarily be the best destination for them. For many ex-combatants in the DDR process, a return to their community of origin is both their desire and what will best position them for civilian success. However, DDR should not necessarily equate reinsertion and reintegration with return to one's community of origin. Reinsertion assistance is well established as a critical step in the overall DDR process, but the options given to the reporters for a destination should be expanded beyond only home community. For reasons previously discussed in this report, the reintegration process is highly individual and an automatic systemic response that returns individuals to their community without regard for their specific circumstances has the potential to needlessly exacerbate trauma, community conflict, and forced, rapid migration. This initial misstep can stunt reintegration, potentially compromising the entire DDR effort as, "Failure to reintegrate those who have been demobilized will undermine the achievements of disarmament and demobilization, placing the DDR programme at risk and increasing instability" (IDDRS Operational Guide, 2010). Therefore, it is critical that future DDR abandons approaches that automatically assume return to community of origin but instead employs a more flexible approach that factors in a wider array of placement considerations for returning reporters. Some DDR programs already incorporate this level of consideration, however, it should be universally applied.

5.4b Incorporate a migration strategy into the DDR country plan

To date DDR programming has largely ignored the interplay between migration and reintegration and therefore largely overlooked service provision to those who have migrated. To better achieve DDR reintegration goals, it is crucial that migration be acknowledged and planned for in the overall design of reinsertion and reintegration policies and programs. Current programming is designed with the assumption that reporters will need services in the locations where they were initially returned. However, the reality is that many reporters migrate from that initial destination and quickly lose access to any ongoing DDR services as a consequence.

A critical piece of any plan should be tracking of ex-combatants wishing to receive ongoing or future assistance. This would likely extend the benefits of reintegration services such as vocational training or psychological counseling to ex-combatants irrespective of whether or not they migrate. It is important that ex-combatants are able to opt in or opt out of such a tracking mechanism, as not to create added fears that the government is watching them, but also to respect the desires of many ex-combatants who wish to move for anonymity and to start anew in a new community. Less invasive approaches such as informational text messages could be utilized to maintain a balance of service and anonymity and potentially lead to increased participation from incredulous beneficiaries.

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Another promising approach employed elsewhere is the allocation of Community Focal Points (CFPs - community level counselors or outreach staff) assigned to arriving ex-combatant migrants. Uganda has CFPs, who support ex-combatants at their original community of reinsertion and could perhaps play this role. It is important that such a support mechanism provide assistance in migration destinations in a similar manner as it does in the community of origin. Additionally, the focus should remain on reintegration into the community as a whole and avoid approaches that reinforce a rebel identity.

A migration strategy for DDR should also incorporate an assessment of planned DDR actions through a migration lens for determining whether or not these actions encourage unnecessary migration. The Amnesty Commission garnered significant praise amongst interviewees in terms of social and emotional support and advocacy across districts. Yet, this positive opinion of AC has fueled superfluous and preventable migration to Kampala. Reporters frequently indicated moving to Kampala specifically to be closer to the Amnesty Commission headquarters, and many continue to remain nearby in the expectation or hope that additional assistance will be made available and that they will be the first to benefit due to their proximity.

To counter migration caused by perceived advantages of proximity to service providers, enhanced clear communications to ex-combatants alongside equitable access to services throughout the country are critical. In Uganda the Amnesty Commission could enhance its communications to clearly convey to these individuals and all reporters that proximity to the Amnesty Commission will result in no increased benefit. However, eliminating this pull factor altogether requires that Amnesty Commission also give no preference to those residing in Kampala over those residing elsewhere, and in the same vein, aim to ensure that reporters residing in rural areas receive the same level of benefit as expeditiously as those residing in district capitals. Enhanced clear communications to accurately inform reporter expectations are also important for overall DDR programming. Reporters from all over Uganda have voiced frustration over many years of unclear and even misleading communications to reporters by the Amnesty Commission that has resulted in severe disappointment by many reporters with the benefits and services they have received. This situation has encouraged some reporters to come to Kampala and others to spend a significant amount of time at the Central office in Kampala, further delaying other positive reintegration activities. Clear and realistic communications should be employed going forward so as not to encourage further movement for these reasons.

5.4c Support ex-combatants who desire to stay in or return to their communities of origin

Migration is not necessarily negative, and some who migrate are better off. However reporters who desire to remain in their communities should be supported in that endeavor. Such support can decrease either the push or the pull factors determining one's migration, and likely a combination thereof. Within DDR programming this can and does take a variety of forms, including peace and reconciliation, educational support, vocational training, and more. It is here that the overlap between migration and broader considerations becomes glaringly clear. In framing support programming it will be important to account for differentiated needs by rebel group or region, gender and age. Additionally, the DDR reintegration programming should be designed to facilitate partnerships between the government or other agency implementing the DDR programming and other government agencies and non-governmental service providers. This will be important in addressing the continuing and future service needs of migrant ex-combatants. In Uganda, the Amnesty Commission's Information Counseling and Referral Service (ICRS) is an example of a DDR program building coordination and effective utilization of resources and services.

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Peace and reconciliation dialogue is a crucial piece of the reintegration process and in supporting reporters' ability to stay in their communities. Interviewees frequently praised the Amnesty Commission's work in the area of peace and reconciliation dialogue, emphasizing its importance in reducing and even eliminating resistance to their return. Several reporters also felt that there remained work to be done in this area, particularly in smaller villages and rural communities, which points to a need for tailoring CPRD interventions to different regions and populations. Another aspect of this effort is the continued enforcement of the Amnesty Act non-discrimination provisions. The AC is a place reporters can come if they have problems in their communities, both for legal support, but also many interviewees reported that the basic presence of the AC helped them feel safe and that the peace and reconciliation dialogue supported by the AC has been a critical element in their return and reintegrate. As the AC works toward completing its mission of successful reporter reintegration, it is important to share this responsibility with other departments so it is not solely under the purview of the AC and continues to remain independent of the UPDF.

A major cause of ex-combatant migration in Uganda appears to be the lack of sustainable livelihoods for these individuals. This has implications that reach far beyond migration, however economic needs were found to be the most common reason for migration and support in this area could significantly reduce the need to move in Uganda. A common desire among the interviewees was to obtain and hold a job. In fact, while many had significant needs, the majority, regardless of rebel group, gender or age responded that a job was what they currently need most. To achieve this, program implementers should prioritize training, education including life skills and alternative education, and expansion of employment opportunities. The current Amnesty Commission Peace Dialogue and Reconciliation Program (PDRP) is on track and a step in the right direction. Additional thought should go into the types of trainings offered based on market assessments of the needs in the local communities. Several factors in migration decisions that emerged were related to a forced, and otherwise unnecessary, move to other predominately urban communities to acquire services and training that could not otherwise be obtained much closer to home.

While traditionally outside of the DDR purview, the issue of land rights is a significant problem for ex-combatants and a major driver of migration. A large number of reporters now have no access to land due to discrimination and absence. While land disputes are increasingly a challenge throughout Uganda, those disputes clearly resulting from discrimination merit legal assistance. Additionally, lack of land is increasingly an issue for female reporters who, due to stigma from their involvement in the rebel groups, are not allowed to use the family land. Many of these women are also caring for children that were born in the bush or against the mother's will. Along with their mothers, these children are usually not accepted back into their mothers' community and both the boys and girls will have no rights to land. The lack of access to land for female ex-combatants and their offspring was reported to be a significant driver of migration and will continue to be until an alternative option allowing access to land becomes available for these individuals.

It is also important to note, once more, that migration decisions are fluid and circumstances ever-rebalancing. Therefore ex-combatants that were once prevented from returning to their communities of origin due to insecurity or severe stigma may eventually find that such factors have waned and will wish to return. A desire to return home was common among interviewees who frequently reported not feeling part of a new community because it was simply not home. Any amount of time spent in the new location had not made it feel more like home and they believed they would feel displaced until such time at which they could return to their community of origin. Some of the factors preventing return were minimal, such as transportation costs, while the majority of respondents cycled back to issues of

economics, land, housing and stigma. A tracking mechanism and ongoing awareness of reporters' changing needs would facilitate assisting those individuals now able to return home in the process of returning.

5.5 Summary

The experiences of the reporters interviewed for this research indicate that migration is present and in some areas common for ex-combatants in Uganda. Unfortunately, DDR programming has largely ignored the presence of migration in its design and implementation. This is both a missed opportunity and at times an impediment to the long-term success of the DDR effort. To address this problem it is recommended that DDR programs:

1. Rethink the frequently employed DDR assumption that all reporters must necessarily be returned to their community of origin
2. Incorporate a migration strategy into the DDR country plan
3. Support ex-combatants who desire to stay in or return to their communities of origin

These recommendations are intended to improve the effectiveness of DDR programs and further support ex-combatants in their social and economic reintegration as peaceful and productive civilians.