

## DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION ISSUES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

NGO Networking Service

### INTRODUCTION

**T**he Horn of Africa has suffered perhaps more than any other sub-region in the world as a result of chronic war, particularly in the last half century. Even within the African continent – which played host to half of the UN's Peacekeeping Operations in 1993 (8 from a global total of 16) – the Horn has been the most consistently afflicted by fighting in the pre- and post-colonial eras. Work on improving the livelihood and welfare of its people, who survive on some of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, is regularly hindered, even reversed as this situation persists.

Globally, the attention of governments and the non-governmental sector has turned towards 'building' peace in recent years. Intrastate conflict has increased as the end of the Cold War stopped being "a massive distraction from and a new framework for suppressing people's discontent with the cultural, ethnic, political and economic legacy of the old Northern Empires". This has demanded a response from intergovernmental organisations like the UN and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) alike. Couched in humanitarian terms but frequently embroiled in political events, efforts to intervene in ongoing conflict have had, at best, mixed success.

As a result, interest has grown in other means to promote peace, such as preventive diplomacy and the expansion of early warning mechanisms. These can be attractive to the international community as they are cheaper – although to date less than 2% of the US \$ 6 billion spent on humanitarian intervention has gone for prevention.<sup>1</sup> They are also more likely to attract political support and have a longer term perspective. For the latter reason these are approaches which gain support from nations where, too often, military and emergency humanitarian interventions have taken a short term and narrow approach and failed to respect or understand national cultural and political realities.

As a result of the search for better solutions and perhaps to transfer the economic responsibility for doing so, the international donor community is also keen to transfer conflict prevention into the hands of regional intergovernmental bodies such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the African case there is now a conflict resolution mechanism in the OAU, as well as increasing interest in the limited success of the IGADD peace initiative on Sudan.

The latter has demonstrated the usefulness and importance of viewing and addressing issues on the regional level. This goes for demobilisation and reintegration too. If there

is instability on a country's borders the government there will not be in a position to scale down armed forces to the extent they might have liked. In the current atmosphere on the Sudan-Eritrea border, for example, it is unlikely that the Eritrean army will be reduced to the minimum possible. This demonstrates that demobilisation and reintegration is only one part of a number of steps towards peace which must be undertaken simultaneously (as well as carefully) in a region where instability has been the norm.

International attention is now focusing on demobilisation and reintegration evidenced by a growing number of international conferences, papers etc. Organisations such as the OAU set the demobilisation and reintegration process within the post-conflict management context, yet there are also good reasons for demobilisation to be understood as an integral part of peacemaking:

- ❑ in the short term, demobilisation has to be included in a sincerely conducted and resolved peace negotiation. Furthermore, adherence to agreements must be seriously and carefully monitored or the terms of disarmament and demobilisation are a powder-keg ready to explode. (This factor played a role in the resumption of hostilities in Sudan in 1983 and attempted enforcement of disarmament sparked the escalation of renewed conflict in Mogadishu in 1992).
- ❑ in the longer term, demobilisation and successful reintegration to a civilian way of life are vital to stability and therefore to the protection of a peaceful environment. Peace activists assert that "initiatives should first focus on local conflicts, then on regional conflicts and only then on national conflicts".<sup>2</sup> Ensuring that individual ex-combatants are accepted and settled back into society is a vital element in maintaining peace at the local level.

For Eritrea where one in thirty people has been a fighter, and Ethiopia where more than half a million on both sides have lived by the gun, this is a central consideration for governments and society.

Institutions such as the World Bank take examples such as that of Uganda to argue that economic necessity is also a large part of why countries should demobilise. "Essentially a taboo subject in lending circles in 1990, reducing the economic and political burden of the security sector had become firmly entrenched in the development agenda by 1993."<sup>3</sup> There is now an open debate on the relationship between military and development expenditure. Donors are pushing for the former to be decreased (and are prepared to assist in the process) if governments want to get economic support for development.

Commitment to supporting demobilisation in Africa is an important endeavour. But as President Museveni recently stated, demobilisation and reintegration should not be viewed as a "fashion", nor should it be "pushed too far out of the political situation which gave rise to the conflict in the first place".<sup>4</sup> A warning to those who tend to see the process of scaling down the military only within the narrow economic context of resource transfers for restructuring.

Voices from the region express the hope that economic and political support for demobilisation and reintegration comes with a willingness to understand the idiosyncratic needs of the nations and people who are trying to distance themselves from military dominance. Donor recognition - in word at least - that the process of demobilisation and reintegration must be owned by the implementing government (despite calls for more donor influence over, and involvement in, planning and design) is a positive sign in this direction.

## FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to address the major issues arising from demobilisation and reintegration efforts and plans in the Horn of Africa. It examines experience in the countries to date, looking in detail at some of the lessons that have been learnt. It does not tell the whole story in any of the countries. Rather the gaps, mistakes, lessons and successes are highlighted to give NGOs and others, an opportunity to establish where they might play a useful role and where more research is required. As such it describes demobilisation and reintegration exercises which have taken and are taking place, and looks at their design, funding and implementation within the context of the countries in question. However, it should be noted here that there are concerns for example about people excluded from programmes (e.g. if they were armed but were not formally recognised as an 'army') which have not been addressed in detail.

## DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of continuity we have chosen to use definitions of demobilisation and reintegration prescribed by the World Bank in its *Demobilisation and Reintegration of Military Personnel in Africa* document written in October 1993.<sup>5</sup>

Demobilisation is *"the process by which the armed forces (government and/or opposition or factional forces such as guerrilla armies) either downsize or completely disband ... in many countries demobilisation and reintegration are part of a much broader transformation from a war to a peace-time economy (transfer of resources to non-military sectors, restructuring of infrastructure, restoration of security) ... (and are often accompanied by) a restructuring of the armed forces..."*

Reintegration programmes generally refer to targeted programmes of cash compensation, training or income generation meant to increase the potential for economic and social reintegration of ex-combatants and their families, or other displaced persons.

Reintegration requires more than basic inputs for it to work. There is often a need for psychological counselling, not included in the definition above, which can be a vital element in a successful transition to civilian life.

The term selected to refer to demobilised people in this text is 'ex-combatants'. While this does not accurately define members of guerrilla forces who may never have seen

active combat, it most closely describes the majority affected. Where the context clearly calls for the terms soldier or fighter to be used, this is done.

## WHO ARE THE DEMOBILISED?

The people who are (potentially) addressed in demobilisation and reintegration programmes in the Horn region come from qualitatively different backgrounds with different outlooks and needs. Each country is distinct, but there are also a number of groups which cut across national boundaries.

The Somalia/Somaliland clan-based militias (from variations of the sixteen main factions in the country) are independently organised and motivated by clan loyalty. They have been sub-classified by UNOSOM into:

- ❑ factional militias which are more highly structured;
- ❑ clan militia groups which are said to operate more as 'freelance' militia men only participating in combat on an *ad hoc* basis;
- ❑ the 'morian' are another armed group of young unemployed men who undertake banditry and otherwise threaten communities;
- ❑ in Somaliland there are also ex-fighters of the SNM;

In the Sudan the potential ex-combatants include the formal government armed forces (75 000 army, 6 000 airforce), the Sudan People's Liberation Army of about 50 000 and the Southern Sudan Independence Army 5-6 000. Various militia groups should be added to these, such as:

- ❑ Popular Defence Force, recruited from urban areas by the National Islamic Front (NIF);
- ❑ 'Murahalin' (literally - 'the travellers') from the states bordering on the south; and
- ❑ other militias from within the south which are hostile to the SPLA.

In Eritrea some 48 000 out of a total of 95 000 members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) will be demobilised. These persons are mostly from rural backgrounds, highly politically motivated, accustomed to a communal way of life. Some formally termed 'fighters' have worked in administrative jobs.

In Ethiopia it is possible to differentiate between four groups:

- ❑ the almost half a million (already demobilised) members of the army of the former Government of Mengistu Haile Mariam, with a large majority of conscripts;
- ❑ around 20 000 Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) members, presently the focus of a new demobilisation programme, from the force of the Ethiopian People's

Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) estimated to be 90 000 according to diplomatic sources;

- ❑ some 22 200 Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) members were encamped following fighting between them and the EPRDF forces in mid - 1992. The large majority were finally released in 1994 and there have been some programmes targeting them with reintegration assistance. Numbers claiming assistance have fluctuated; according to NGO sources some demobilised continue to participate in low intensity resistance to the Government and are therefore subject to detention; and
- ❑ many police, members of district committees, and other regional forces (such as Afar and groups in the southern regions).

Cutting across national boundaries are four groups which have special needs, namely women, children, the disabled and dependants.

The experience of life in a liberation front (for it is these which have used more women in the fighting) was a move towards emancipation, although *“women fought a double war in the field”*.<sup>6</sup> On returning to civilian life they and women from the army too, more than their male counterparts are brought into head-on confrontation with the social mores of the (mostly conservative and rural) societies from which they came.

While few organisations will openly admit to the use of under eighteen year-olds in combat, it is widely agreed that the children who have seen combat in the region are numerous. As they leave the front behind, they may suffer, in particular, difficulties of socialisation and education - never having known a life outside of war and the all encompassing world of the armed forces.

Having paid a higher price than any other survivors, the disabled are often strongly motivated and feel that their sacrifice should be recognised and rewarded in the post-war period. This applies to both the winners and the losers. Addressing their needs calls for a high level of input and for developing strategies which increase their chances of returning to the community.

Meanwhile, the absence of combatants from the community has created a needy population of their dependants. For those who were away from home for many years, they have even taken on a second family. When the war ends, some families are left without support structures while other dependants who were left behind in war time have high expectations as the head of the family returns. These women and children are also casualties of the war and contribute to the large numbers of displaced, created by conflict, for whom there is little prospect of a favourable solution to their problems in the longer term.

There is also a high level of AIDS among ex-soldiers. Soldiers are often away from family and garrisoned in towns. As a result they are a high risk group for sexually transmitted diseases, particularly AIDS. When they return home at the end of a war,

they take the diseases with them, spreading them into communities previously free of infection. In North Omo, Ethiopia, for example, a region where many ex-soldiers returned, a Catholic mission has revised its programme priorities as a result of growing numbers of AIDS cases. They are now involved in counsellor training, education, information and family support to address the issue.

## DEMOBILISATION AS PART OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The most symbolic and often the first step in the transition from a military to a civilian life is disarming. It is *“a traumatic process for all armies”*, and has been described in the case of Somaliland to be *“an act of faith in a sea of uncertainty”*.<sup>7</sup>

In many parts of the Horn the possession of a weapon is an integral part of life. It is unlikely that many farmers in the region, for example, would be without their gun in war or peace. At the same time, the number of people who carry guns and use them has grown dramatically in recent years as such weaponry has become more widely available.

In southern Sudan, for example, guns are an integral part of the culture *“if I do not carry a gun,”* says James Wole of the local NGO Community Development Association, *“the men despise me as a defenceless woman”*. Moreover, weapons are considered one of the benefits of war and are well integrated into the economy, Mr Wole explains, *“if you kill a government soldier, you keep the gun - and use it for buying cattle ... you can get six cows for one gun - when it used to cost ten.”*

Protection, survival and economic benefit are also some of the reasons why ex-combatants may be motivated to retain their arms when they are disbanded. The potential benefits bear a direct relationship to the security situation in which they find themselves. Thus, classifying groups by their form of organisation, their style of operation and the reasons and context for their demobilisation, becomes a clear indicator of how difficult disarming will be.

Where forces are disciplined and unified (be they fighters in Eritrea or soldiers in Uganda) and where that force is itself making the decision to demobilise in a relatively peaceful national situation, this phase poses no particular difficulties at the outset - although in the longer term resorting back to arms may become an issue. Where a force is defeated (for example the Ethiopian Army) those who are captured are forced to part with their weaponry; in the immediate post-war instability some may try to sell, or others keep, their weapons, to pursue a life of banditry/robbery.

There were four mechanisms established to collect weapons in the immediate post-war phase in Ethiopia. Soldiers either:

- ❑ surrendered to the EPRDF forces;

- ❑ responded to a call in the media to hand in weapons to the district councils;
- ❑ surrendered weapons following searches by district level security committees;
- ❑ or surrendered weapons to authorities in the states where they had taken refuge (51 000 in Sudan and 28 000 in Djibouti).

In a recent study of crime rates in Ethiopia and Uganda (presented elsewhere in this book) following demobilisation, it is reported that *"in Ethiopia, the police considered that demobilisation had initially caused an increase in crime, particularly rural banditry. However, by early 1993, the incidence of crime was quite modest in almost all areas, comparing favourably with Kenya."*<sup>8</sup> This bears out the theory that many ex-soldiers were initially attracted to using a gun for survival - even if weapons were handed in, they would not be difficult to purchase. Similarly *"the demobilisation is believed by the authorities to have contributed to the insurrection by the OLF during mid - 1992."*<sup>9</sup>

Where there is a peace negotiation (and possibly a treaty) between contending groups (two but perhaps more) this issue becomes more contentious and complex. It was the attempt to forcibly implement a disarmament process (along with the decentralisation of power to district councils) which led to the June 1992 escalation of hostilities in Somalia. Where disarmament does occur, as it has done partially in Hargeisa, it is important but still only *"a courageous step which has yet to be transformed into irreversible momentum towards demobilisation"*.<sup>10</sup> The possible reverses are evident currently with the fighting in the area.

In all but the first case, where the forces are under the control of one military command it is extremely difficult to identify how many combatants there are to be demobilised and how many arms they have. To take an extreme case; in Mozambique, a UN consultant to the demobilisation process there - where each man was required to hand in one weapon - asserted that this left around 90 % of the arms estimated to be in the country in circulation.<sup>11</sup> Estimates from an aid source say there may be up to two weapons per head in Ethiopia alone.

Given these risks it is reasonable that, in spite of a stable environment there is a legitimate concern to ensure that a military force exists which is strong enough to 'enforce the rules of the game'. In Uganda, this argument was used for retaining the *status quo* i.e. integrating all the opposing forces into a national army. However, the same action can also create legitimate concern among a well-organised, but small force on being integrated with a larger force opponent.

The EPRDF in Ethiopia only integrated some 6 000 of the former forces into the new army, although donors tried to raise the possibility of reintegrating more of them as a contribution to reconciliation efforts.

## DEMobilISATION AND REINTEGRATION AS PART OF POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION

The challenges posed by demobilisation and reintegration must be examined within the context of the overall devastation wrought by war in recent decades. Food production capacity and infrastructure are common targets for attack. Civilians are displaced by fighting and famine, losing their assets and opportunities to improve livelihood in the process. Health and education spending suffer at the cost of military spending. At the end of the war, the needs of the community are enormous and the needs of ex-combatants are only a subset of these.

The Zimbabwean consultancy team supported by UNDP which worked with the National Demobilisation Commission in Somaliland had from its own experience, learnt that it is vital to the success of reintegration programmes (Zimbabwe is still supporting reintegration efforts some fourteen years after the initial demobilisation exercise) to integrate them into *"the wider social context"*. They intend to support local NGOs and women's organisations, as well as promoting a broad public education programme in the early stages of the reintegration process in Somaliland to facilitate this. In Ethiopia, the TPLF undertook wide ranging discussions with the community in areas where TPLF fighters would return on demobilisation, to ensure that their concerns were incorporated into programme planning.

Overall programme orientation should be towards meeting the needs of both ex-combatants and the communities to which they return, and must also encourage full reintegration by ensuring that ex-combatants are no longer a special group among the community, (so that they receive neither more nor fewer privileges than their neighbours). Nevertheless, it is important that programme design should recognise where and how they and their experience differs. The demographics of the Ethiopian Army, for example, reveal that the majority were conscripted from the rural areas - their experience in the army will have wrought substantial change from the lives they would have chosen to lead.

## THE NATIONAL PEACE DIVIDEND

One of the first major possibilities for establishing a peace time economy is the transfer of resources away from military expenditure. This can be effected through reductions in arms purchases and scaling down the numbers of military personnel to a point where both resource availability and defence requirements are balanced. Theoretically, this produces an economic 'peace dividend' which can be used for spending on reconstruction efforts. But Alemayeu Haile Mariam, Ethiopian Deputy Commissioner, commented during the course of an OAU/GCA meeting on demobilisation, *"the only peace dividend which cannot be gainsaid is the peace itself"* (intervention at OAU/GCA meeting on demobilisation).

There are two reasons why the peace dividend can be elusive:

- ❑ Military expenditure is often effected from international donors' funding of grants and loans which would not be available for civil expenditures. There is therefore not a clear correlation between decreasing defence expenditure and increased development funding availability.
- ❑ The expenses involved in demobilising and reintegrating soldiers effectively can be (depending on the demands and choices made) very high. Thus the 'spare' money generated by demobilisation can be soaked up by the process itself, at least in the initial stages. Hence there is growing donor concern with the cost-effectiveness of demobilisation programmes.<sup>12</sup>

Yet in the Ethiopian case there has clearly been a peace dividend. This has allowed spending in the social and health sectors in the first two years of the transitional period to increase, despite the introduction of structural adjustment measures at the time. For planners, it is important that the demobilisation and reintegration process and the potential economic benefits and burdens it brings be integrated into the development planning process.

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Resource allocation refers to land, credit and training.

Where soldiers have been away from home areas for an extended time, there is a likelihood that they will have lost previously held claims to land. Two other factors contribute to difficulties encountered in providing land to ex-combatants: first, in areas where there is high pressure on land and where traditional land holding systems are still in place, there may be many competing claims on land and no clear means of allocating it to returnees; secondly, the community to which they are returning may not be prepared to surrender land which they have been tending.

In agricultural areas, the allocation of land is vital to the capacity of ex-combatants to reintegrate effectively. In a recent paper on possibilities for demobilisation in Somalia the suggestion was made to *"negotiate with (militia) land"*<sup>13</sup> based on the success of land grants in Uganda and on the fact that pre-war studies show that 'the best growth prospects among all sectors were in food crop production'.<sup>14</sup> Paul Collier writes that ex-combatants *"if returning to their home areas and given some assistance, are, with identifiable exceptions, able to find income-earning opportunities ... conversely the attempt to link demobilisation with special employment schemes appears to be ill-advised."*<sup>15</sup>

Land allocation was a problem at the beginning of the reintegration process in Ethiopia. Where in theory conscripts had the right to return to land which their neighbours had been tending in their absence, in reality only a small number were able to do so. The Government eventually pushed through a proclamation to the local level which allocated land previously held by the community, to the ex-soldiers. This

only applied to those who participated in the encampment process, those who did not register received no land or assistance and continue to fall into the 'needy' category for NGO and government food distributions, for example. In Eritrea, many ex-fighters who want to return to life with their families will be doing so in the highlands where population pressure is high, this issue is therefore also likely to be difficult to address.

Given the lack of formal employment opportunities in Ethiopia and Eritrea, the favoured option for support to ex-combatants has been to facilitate setting them up in business. Plans have been made through the formal banking sector for funds to be made available (from government and donor funding). Evidence from Uganda, where the Ugandan Veterans Assistance Board has been unable to facilitate credit to ex-combatants, points to the value of providing cheap credit, as many businesses in their early stages there suffer from lack of funds for capital inputs.

In Ethiopia, ex-soldiers are not expected to produce collateral and are charged the deposit rate of interest on the principal of their loan. This cheap lending has been criticised from an economic perspective, on the basis that the revolving fund will decapitalise over time and it would actually be cheaper to provide grants to the ex-combatants rather than administer a credit scheme over a long period. The Commission feels, however, that a major objective of the scheme is social as opposed to economic, that is to foster the practice of self-reliance among the ex-soldiers by making them responsible for repaying loans and encouraging them to take initiative. They are aware of the potential fund decapitalisation and feel that it is a price worth paying for the social benefit. This concept has yet to convince economists in donor institutions and its relative value will only be revealed in the light of experience.

It is important in this respect to recognise the need for evaluations to address social as well as economic objectives - asking questions of the ex-combatants around the issues of whether and how they are coping with civilian life, and how their capacity to look after themselves is assisted through the programme.

Demobilisation and reintegration is an economic resource issue but it is more importantly a human resource issue. The people who are newly sent back into society can be a powerful force in the reconstruction of the country, conversely they can be a further drain on over-stretched resources. The factors which impact on which they will be, are what capacities they have gained from their experience in the army, and what inputs can be made available to them to expand and develop these.

Training is presented by many writers on the demobilisation and reintegration issue as a central component in any programme. Certainly, if combatants are young when they enter the armed forces, they miss out on the chance to be trained - even if that training would have been the long and informal process of gathering knowledge of traditional agricultural practices.

It is vital that the role of training in equipping ex-combatants with the skills they require is set within the development context to which they will return. There is no point in

training people for work as blacksmiths where demand does not exist, for example. Training can also be highly capital intensive, particularly where initial investment is required in infrastructure.

However, there are areas where it is indispensable. For example, where credit schemes are the backbone of assistance, it is necessary to provide training in how to manage finances and organisation. Also for disabled ex-combatants who are not in a position to return to agricultural work, the high investment is both warranted in terms of their need and the high potential benefit they will gain. Importantly, it can avoid the "intense resentment" experienced in Uganda - where no special provision was made for disabled - based on *"the perception that the Government (had) discarded onto communities incapable of handling the problem, those who had made the greatest sacrifices..."*.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in poor countries there are not sufficient resources to provide prostheses.

Aside from practical training, the issue of training ex-combatants for civilian life through political education is a thorny one for governments. In the fragile environment of many African countries it seems sensible in the context of building democracy to give new civilians the tools to become responsible members of society, especially in light of the fact that their past experience would have had little to do with a democratic process. However, donors can be suspicious of the motives of such initiatives.

It would appear, however, that there is more concern about this issue once disarmament and demobilisation is in process. The Ugandan army undertook political re-education for the forces integrated into the National Resistance Army prior to their demobilisation<sup>17</sup> and were not questioned, whereas the EPRDF's programme to hold 'group discussions' during encampment concerned donors because of its perceived undertones of political indoctrination.

This is an example of how important it can be for donors to co-ordinate and share information, not only across organisations responsible for relief/development but also between military and civilian agencies. Furthermore, the content of such programmes should be examined for their substance, so that they can be assessed according to their objectives and methods, and not on the basis of how they may appear to the international community.

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REINTEGRATION

The trauma of war alone leaves ex-combatants with a heavy burden post-war. On top of this they have to face a transition into a society which may not be prepared to accept them, either because they were associated with a regime which created suffering among the people, or because they have undergone profound changes in lifestyle and beliefs, or both.

Internal coping mechanisms differ from culture to culture and one of the hardest issues for organisations aiming to alleviate psycho-social issues, is how to design approaches which recognise these differences. For example, in cases of post traumatic stress disorder in Vietnam War Veterans, the question 'do you remember your friends?' can elicit denial as a response from sufferers. In the cultural context of Eritrea, for example, no fighter would deny knowing friends.<sup>18</sup>

Where the demands of survival are so high and take up most of the attention of any poor person, addressing psycho-social issues may seem something of a luxury. It cannot be taken as a top priority next to ensuring food security, for example. However, for the many who will be able to push the experience and the damage to the back of their minds, there will be a minority for whom the effort will be overwhelming and who will need assistance. Organisations which are responsible for demobilisation and reintegration programmes need to have at least a few trained individuals who are prepared to tackle this issue, by bringing in external expertise where necessary and establishing a system through which they can get support.

For women ex-combatants in any country the problems of reintegration are multiplied. In Eritrea, for example, while it is not possible to generalise on the response which they will receive from families, there is evidence that those families who disapprove of their lifestyle (when women will not serve food or attend church, for example) withdraw financial support. In the context of their continuing to operate without salaries while working, and with a housing crisis in the city, this makes continuation of an independent existence extremely hard.<sup>19</sup>

Generally women's choices after demobilisation are also limited. The practice of job allocation on the basis of gender will not change quickly, so women find themselves with few choices if they are no longer in government/movement structures - secretary or maid at best, prostitution at worst. There are, so far, a few schemes by NGOs which aim at developing skills for women (for example computer training in Addis Ababa and Asmara) with the intention of giving them a chance to access better paying jobs, other support can be for income generation in retail and food services. The non-governmental organisation ACORD is employing women alongside men to become 'barefoot bankers' for credit schemes in Eritrea.

In the case of ex-fighters there can also be problems in relationships. Where couples were deployed separately and therefore spent only one month a year together, living as a couple all year can reveal how little they knew each other before. Divorce is now a clear trend among fighters returning to a more traditional lifestyle.

The issue of child soldiers has been most prominent in the case of Sudan where boys as young as 11 have been involved on both sides. While the practice of recruiting young boys continues, there are family reunification efforts undertaken by UNICEF and Swedish Save the Children, and there is some co-operation from the SPLA in these projects. These problems are not likely to decrease where there is widespread dislocation and killing - the Rwandan Patriotic Front has a large number

of children for whom the Front has been 'their only parent' since the massacres in early 1994.<sup>20</sup>

## DEMOBILISATION, REINTEGRATION AND THE RELIEF-TO-DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

There is recognition today of the complexity and the linkage between relief and development in the Horn region. Where there is a recurrent food shortage, governments, NGOs and donors are beginning to see the value of working towards development goals while at the same time addressing relief needs.

Without entering this general debate here, the point should be made that a similar understanding of the overlapping nature of the demands of demobilisation and reintegration programmes is required. Not only do these cut across the development spectrum, they also bridge the military/civilian divide.

Yet, it is useful to divide the demobilisation and reintegration process into phases. The first of these is usually encampment where disarmament takes place, and needs are most akin to those of refugees/internally displaced and fall clearly into the relief mode. The difference is in the understanding that the ex-combatants will definitely be returning to their communities. They do not depend upon a political settlement at home to return, as some kind of settlement was a prerequisite for deciding to demobilise.

As a result, it is much easier to see how longer term needs could be addressed at this stage - it is not necessary to see this simply as a 'holding situation' - there may even be benefits from having the ex-combatants in one place for training. From evidence to date, the use of this time for surveying the ex-combatants to ascertain their basic capacities and their preferences for the future presents a good opportunity.

Logistical support for the return home is well organised through those with relief expertise (the army or external actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross), but once ex-combatants are into their home or chosen community their needs are diverse.

Once in their home community, they may continue to need food assistance until they are able to harvest, or benefit from the product of an initial period of work (relief). They will need the basic inputs to sustain such a livelihood (rehabilitation in the form of tools, draught animals, for example) or credit assistance if in a position to establish a small business. There are many problems for them when they first return, as they may have been away from their 'home' for up to twenty years; they may not be able to trace their family and may actively dislike a rural life after their experience in the army.

Finally within their community there are ongoing (development) needs for water, better health provision etc., which are likely to be heightened by the arrival of more people.

It is at this point that donor assistance can fall through the gaps between a clearly defined process of food assistance, data gathering and logistics to the more complex transition into the community.

Demobilisation and reintegration are relatively new issues for the donor community. There are very few written analyses of different programmes and experiences. Decisions about what kind of programme will work best, and why, are still therefore hard to come by. In the example above, the lack of guidance available must be seen as contributing to late donor turnaround on an initial proposal.

Demobilisation is often linked with an unstable political climate and can involve negotiation among groups who are new to each other (less likely in a planned demobilisation and reintegration such as that which the Transitional Ethiopian Government will undertake for TPLF fighters.) The initial political will to support the process can evaporate very quickly if the situation stabilises - thinking is often very short term at this point along the lines of "*(thinking) the problem would melt away.*"<sup>21</sup> Here demobilisation and reintegration falls through the gap between diplomatic imperatives and development priorities.

One of the most successful elements of the process of demobilisation in Ethiopia was the transition from the camps to home communities: the ICRC was commended by everyone involved for having done an excellent job in this regard. They are set up to work in emergencies and immediate post-war situations, and their preparedness showed. Similarly the UNDP intervention after the discussions broke down in late 1991, was, on its own terms, a success. Its choice to concentrate on reintegration into agriculture rather than on high input training has also been a workable solution.

Generally, the lack of a donor body or mechanism which has the mandate to deal with the demobilisation issue is one constraint. So far proposals for donors to divide the responsibility according to expertise is the favoured solution, yet this also has limitations:

- ❑ Donors are not internally organised to handle funding which is needed quickly but is aimed at addressing medium to long term needs. As Marge Bonner of USAID put it "*trying to do demobilisation as development doesn't work, as it's an unusual hybrid.*"
- ❑ Donors prefer to have input and influence over the design of a large co-ordinated project when they are asked to fund a part of it.
- ❑ No organisation has the mandate to cover the breadth of needs of demobilisation and reintegration - from the beginning (i.e. during the negotiation process) to the end, perhaps with residual counselling and support services.
- ❑ Committees established to take decisions must involve individuals mandated to do so. In Ethiopia, the informal donor group met regularly but as the main emergency

took place during the summer, many ambassadors were absent and their deputies were not given the authority to act, thus contributing to the delays in response.

For these structural reasons, it is not enough to call for better, or more, donor co-ordination, but there is a need for donors to develop internal flexibility with respect to this issue. Such flexibility also needs to be facilitated by recognition of the complexity of donor agenda at the political level. In particular, the conflicts between different departments within one administration: what a military/security department may encourage, one dealing with social and economic issues may well discourage. This problem is not open to simple solutions, but improvements can be effected by increasing inter-departmental co-ordination with the aim of giving a clear message to the agency working on the ground, about the aims and objectives of involvement in a demobilisation and reintegration programme.

In Somalia, for example, a disarmament process was undertaken by UNOSOM which relieved a large number of people of heavy weapons, from the streets of Mogadishu. It was dropped, however, when they tried to expand it to personal arms and ran into fierce resistance from militias. An office was established for disarmament, demobilisation and de-mining, staffed by a retired general and a civilian (i.e. it was not run as an integral part of the military operation). While there was substantial emphasis upon the need for disarmament and de-mining, the need for incentives for the disarmed men and demobilisation programmes was neglected. Of the US \$ 1,5 billion per year spent on the UN operation in the country, there was virtually no funding for demobilisation.

## PROGRAMME DESIGN

So far, studies undertaken on demobilisation and reintegration have looked at the 'what' and 'how' of programmes and have endeavoured to enumerate the choices available in developing programmes suitable in a given country.

When discussing reintegration, it is generally assumed that the best solution for ex-combatants is for them to return from whence they came and to pick up a life in the community while they are reabsorbed, but discourse rarely diverges from the attempt to alleviate this burden, seeking rather ways to avoid it. The design of the programme for the demobilisation of TPLF fighters in Ethiopia is an exception.

Tigray is a drought-prone region, with severe population pressure in precisely the areas from which the majority of the ex-fighters come. The demobilisation programme has taken the unorthodox approach of settling them in an area in the west of Tigray (Humera) where there are far fewer people. They will live in an area together and will not be 'reintegrated' into an existing community.

Humera is very fertile (one reason why it was chosen) but it is lowland and plagued with malaria and snakes - these being the main physical constraints on natural

population growth. According to the Commission, so far between 5,000 and 7,000 ex-fighters have gone to the area. They have been clearing the land and constructing residences, education and health facilities with assistance from fighters still in the army.

While there will also be some fighters reintegrated into communities, it is planned that the vast majority will be part of this programme (the final figure is thought to be around 20,000 but will depend upon the composition of the National Army, to be decided in the constitution and on the basis of the census). The Ministry of Defence is providing equipment and manpower and the Government will also be funding the programme, donors have been requested to assist with capital inputs. Most of the land has been cultivated with cotton this year (prior to the ex-fighters settling) and the proceeds from selling this will also provide funds.

This would appear to be one of the first programmes in Africa attempting to move ex-combatants into a civilian life while keeping them together in one place and essentially in a community of their own. Justifications for this approach from the Government include that the resources required to support the demobilised fighters in informal sector activities (i.e. credit) would be enormous; the fighters want to return to Tigray so they need to be accommodated there without increasing population pressure; the programme will provide effective and rapid support for the ex-fighters while developing the economic activities in the region and, finally, the communal living experience of the fighters in the field means they will be able to form a close knit community themselves.

Donors have been somewhat sceptical of the programme so far. There are questions raised about the possibility of making such a large scheme work; the TPLF are quick to explain that land will be held in individual plots and not in co-operatives, and that inputs will have to be bought by individuals after the first year. Donors are also worried about the presence of a large number of ex-fighters together (conveniently) close to the border with Sudan. However, there is also recognition of the high degree of organisation and discipline among the ex-fighters and some express the feeling that given this, such a programme will succeed here, where elsewhere it might not. As this is a new approach it is important not to prejudge its outcome but it will be very important to monitor its problems and successes for lessons to apply elsewhere.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE FOR NGOs?

NGOs are already involved in demobilisation and reintegration efforts in the region and it is clear from the evidence of this research that the impact on areas in which NGOs are involved, is substantial. It is also worthy of note that NGOs are some of the first to suffer from the effects of unsuccessful demobilisation as they are often the victims of banditry.

Some NGOs have raised the issue of the need for a clearer picture of exactly what kind, how many and where programmes are already being undertaken by others. It has not

been within the mandate of this paper to provide such information, but it is recommended that those who have it - the government agencies and bilateral donors concerned - should compile and distribute it so that the body of information influencing decisions on where, how, and to what extent to get involved, can be expanded.

In some cases demobilisation programmes have been run by NGOs rather than government agencies. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Zimbabwe Project supports ex-soldiers' projects, and in Uganda, the Uganda Veterans Assistance Board (headed by two ex-Ministers of Defence and an academic) is the organisation responsible for all programmes for ex-combatants. Inside the region under discussion there are two NGOs specifically set up to be involved in demobilisation, aside from the government bodies. One is for disabled ex-fighters in Eritrea and the other, Soyaal, for ex-soldiers in Somaliland. NGO assistance for institutional support to such organisations can make an important contribution to the development of self-help initiatives.

NGOs which are involved in peace and reconciliation work, can be instrumental in monitoring the progress of reintegration programmes, and should lobby for the inclusion of broader indicators of the progress of reintegration when programmes are evaluated. This could include assessing relations with the family and community structures and how far the ex-combatants themselves feel their needs are addressed and that they are settled into civilian life. This can be part of a broader early-warning system which enables issues to be resolved peacefully at the local level.

In essence, operational NGOs can bring all their areas of expertise and knowledge to bear on demobilisation programmes: in food delivery and distribution in the early stages, and with the supply of rehabilitation inputs where this can be made an integral part of their programmes. The traditional NGO preference to address the needs of the neediest within the context of the whole community is particularly useful where programmes are now being designed to try to do this for ex-combatants.

Specialised agencies in education (particularly for literacy and business training) and health (AIDS especially) can also find initiatives which will prove useful. Addressing the special difficulties faced by women and by very young ex-combatants is an area where NGOs could, and should, do a lot more research. Alongside the psycho-social issue these are by far the most neglected issues in demobilisation and reintegration in the region.

## ENDNOTES

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*An edited version of Demobilisation and Reintegration Issues in the Horn of Africa, first published as Issues Note number two, NGO Networking Service, Inter Africa Group, undated.*