DCR Knowledge Network

Annotated Bibliography

Local Development Theme

Research Question:

How can programmes support the development of attractive economic opportunities for youth in post-conflict situations that may be an alternative to, or way out of, engagement with armed activities?[i]

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Dufka, C. (2005). Youth, poverty and blood: The lethal legacy of West Africa's regional warriors. *Human Rights Watch , 17* (5 (A)), 1-66.

This article is based on interviews conducted with foreign soldiers who had fought as children in Liberia, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Cote D-Ivoire, and Sierra Leone during the 1990s and 2000s. The article concludes that many of the soldiers, whether they had originally chosen to fight voluntarily or had been abducted, had chosen to return to war because of the lack of economic opportunities provided to them in their home regions. It concludes that looting was the main form of payment for these soldiers. The article highlights problems with several disarmament, disengagement, and rehabilitation (DDR) programmes. It claims that corrupt practices were common in relation to the DDR programmes, which generally required that a soldier present a weapon to enrol. The article states that many generals would confiscate weapons from soldiers and provide them to people that that generals favours, whether soldiers or not, to get the benefits afforded by the DDR programmes. Additionally, generals profited from the DDR programmes by forcing soldiers to give the generals a share of any money the soldiers were given as part of the DDR programme. The article states that many DDR programmes did not have independent grievance procedures for exploited soldiers to access. In relation to the DDR programmes specifically, the article concludes that many soldiers that undertook training opportunities could not find employment related to their skills. The article states that many DDR programmes offered limited training options, and calls for a wider variety of options decided on the basis of a market analysis of the skills required in the local economy.

This article offers a good assessment of the factors that have caused young soldiers to join and return to armed conflicts. It gives a good overview of many of the problems that were associated with DDR programmes, and offers some well-considered suggestions to mitigate those problems in future DDR programmes. The article demonstrates the pitfalls associated with DDR programmes that are not well resourced. While the article clearly sets out the issues associated the dominance held by army generals, it does not offer much in the way of approaches that could mitigate that dominance. Of the articles that consider child soldiers in Africa, this is one of the most comprehensive in terms of its consideration of the personal experiences of child soldiers.

Honwana, A. (2009). Children in war: Reintegrating child soldiers.
IDS Bulletin , 40 **(1), 63-68.**

This article stresses the importance of traditional cleansing rituals for the reintegration of child soldiers into their villages. The article compares the cleansing rituals, examples of which are provided from Mozambique and Angola, to a rite of passage, whereby the former soldier moves from participant in war to participant in the community. It is stated that apprenticeships, community sensitisation programmes and support of community rituals are important to the reintegration of child soldiers, but most important of all is acceptance by family. The article notes that war has often caused the socioeconomic conditions of a village, which is often the driver that see child soldiers take part in the war, to be worse than when the child left the village. It states that the chances of long-lasting reintegration are improved vastly if poverty alleviation programmes accompany reintegration efforts.

This article is similar to the Tursunova (2008) article and focuses on using local ritual as a means to reintegrate child soldiers. It provides strong, if general, guidance for reintegration programmes. It should be noted that the rituals the article discusses are all conducted within rural settings.

Kararach, G., Hanson, K., & Leautier, F. (2011). Regional integration policies to support job creation for Africa's burgeoning youth population. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development , 7* **(2/3/4), 177-215.**

This article offers an outline of the "youth bulge" in Africa and the problems associated with unemployed, or underemployed, youth. It is considered that high rates of youth unemployment or underemployment represent a challenge to social stability, and could stagnate economic growth as well as sustainable development. The article argues that regional solutions are needed to create circumstances in which more of Africa's youth can participate in the economy. Attracting more youth to participate in the agriculture sector, while simultaneously improving the profitability of the sector, is put forward as a solution to the issue of youth unemployment. In particular, modernization of the agriculture sector is called for. The article calls for programmes that encourage youth entrepreneurship and enterprise. It calls for greater access to mentoring programmes, financial services, support to access to markets, and more networking opportunities. The article also calls for more investment in education and training opportunities that consider the needs of the region. It points out that unemployment rates for educated youth in Africa are higher than those for uneducated youth, and suggests that this is due to a lack of relevant opportunities available to educated youth.

While useful as an overall snapshot of some of the issues facing youth in Africa, this article fails to offer specific solutions/programmes, and generally relies on neoliberal notions of development to respond to the issue of youth unemployment in Africa. Its suggestions for managing the youth bulge in Africa and the associated problems with unemployment and underemployment are largely policy-based and would require significant government action. That said, the article offers a framework that its authors believe would address the issue of youth unemployment or underemployment and it might be useful to guide an evaluation of existing development programmes.

Peters, K. (2007). Reintegration support for young ex-combatants: A right or a privilege. *International Migration , 45* **(5), 35-59.**

This article concludes that reintegration programmes must take into account the circumstances that gave rise to the recruitment of child soldiers in the first place, namely the lack of genuine economic opportunities for young people. It analyses the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration policies in Sierra Leone following the conflict there. Several options were given to participants, including returning to school, vocational training, and the provision of agricultural implements. The article states that most chose vocational training, which included a monthly allowance and the provision of a toolkit at the end of training. However, the article reports that there were significant delays in entering training programmes, which led to many frustrated rural participants returning to rural villages before they participated in the training. In the end many participants returned to their villages unskilled, or with skills that they could not utilise, and the only options available were poorly paid, un-skilled jobs, which are exactly the circumstances that led to many joining armed militias in the first place. The article argues that the programmes should have placed more focus on agriculture, and emphasis put initially on the benefits of taking up agriculture. It states that many of the participants who elected to receive agricultural implements did much better than their counterparts who entered into vocational training.

This article offers a useful assessment of the disarmament, disengagement, and rehabilitation (DDR) programme in Sierra Leone. It clearly describes many of the issues that arose with the programme and is clear in its support for a stronger emphasis on rural skills development. However, it is not clear how the authors envisage a stronger emphasis on rural skills development occurring within a DDR programme containing options for participants. The article relies largely on anecdotal evidence to conclude that those participants who elected to receive agricultural implements generally were better off than those who chose vocational training.

Stark, L., Boothby, N., & Ager, A. (2009). Children and fighting forces: 10 years on from Cape Town. *Disaster , 33* (4), 522-547.

The article notes that while education is understood to be an important aspect of personal development, studies suggest that it is better to provide assistance that supports normal lifecycle milestones, such as employment, housing and marriage. It advocates for skills training that is decided on the basis of a market analysis of which skills are in demand and which sectors have capacity to absorb more workers. The article notes that apprenticeship programmes have been shown to encourage successful reintegration in several African countries, and have the benefit of also providing psychosocial support. However, the article accepts that problems associated with the scalability of apprenticeship programmes have been recognised, and states that some commentators have argued for more micro-credit initiatives within the recognised limits of the local economies. The article contends that regular follow-up and monitoring of a child soldier's reintegration is important, and where practical/possible should be the responsibility of communities themselves.

This article provides a useful overview of approaches to the reintegration of child soldiers since the turn of the century. It is clearly written and notes the issues that have been associated with different means of reintegration, including those that are considered to be successful, and is realistic in its consideration of the resources required for some approaches. However, it is perhaps too general in its assessment of reintegration programmes. The article sets out some guiding principles for reintegration, as developed by the Inter-Agency Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Working Group, the consideration of which would be useful when planning, implementing, or evaluating reintegration programmes. However, those principles are largely focused on the psychological needs of former child soldiers.

Tursunova, Z. (2008). The role of rituals in healing trauma and reconciliation in post-accord peacebuilding. *Journal of Human Security , 4* **(3), 54-71.**

This article discusses the importance of local ritual for reintegrating child soldiers into their original communities. It states that local ritual is important for the psychological wellbeing of a returning child soldier, and for their acceptance of their reintegration by others in the community. Local spiritual beliefs are said to promote a sense of meaning in those affected by war. The article states that in order to reduce poverty, social development should accompany any reintegration programme. The article discusses a programme to support reintegration through cooperation between returning child soldiers and other young people in the community by facilitating the two groups to work together on civic projects. Prior to the start of the programme, members of the community took part in a workshop that discussed human rights, conflict and its impact, non-violent conflict resolution, peace education and reconciliation.

The article focuses on the importance of local ritual in the reintegration of child soldiers. While it demonstrates its importance through case studies, the diverse nature of local ritual means that its examples are only applicable to the areas where they were practiced. The article devotes a lot of attention to the psychological impacts that participating in war has on child soldiers and their families and associates. The article would be a useful resource to consider when planning, implementing or evaluating reintegration programmes.

Wessells, M. (2005). Child soldiers, peace education, and postconflict reconstruction for peace. *Theory into Practice , 44* (4), 363-369.

This article analyses a programme that was run by the Christian Children's Fund in Sierra Leone to assist the reintegration of child soldiers back into their villages. The programme had three phases. In the first phase, the communities held open meetings to discuss the conflict and what it had meant for them and to consider ways to move forward. The group would prioritise projects, such as rebuilding schools or health centres that had been damaged by the conflict. Facilitators helped the group discuss the issue of child soldiers and how they came to be recruited. The intention of the discussion was to foster empathy and understanding for the child soldier's plight. This was followed by former child soldiers working together with other members of the village on the project that had been prioritised in the group meeting, with the workers being given a monthly stipend to discourage a return to armed activities. Working alongside villagers who had not taken part in the conflict helped foster relations and demonstrated the approachability of the former soldiers. The project's completion had a positive effect on all the villagers, as it demonstrated that progress was being made in the wake of the damaging conflict. The work also opened up avenues for traditional forms of reconciliation and rehabilitation. The former soldiers were given training in specific vocations that had been identified as sources of local jobs. Additionally, the former soldiers participated in discussions about handling conflict without recourse to violence and their role in the village. The article claims that the programme had significant success, with 90% of participants reported to be positive about their future in their villages.

This article provides a good description of a local reintegration programme that its authors contend was successful. It does not consider its wider applicability thoroughly, but it is possible that many aspects of the programme could be replicated elsewhere. Given the localised nature of the programme, it is likely that it would require significant resource to implement it in a number of different settings. The programme required significant buy-in from villagers, which might prove difficult in villages that have been negatively affected by the militias that the child soldiers formerly belonged to. The same programme is discussed in less detail in the Zulfiya (2008) article.

ⁱ *NB In earlier discussions it was decided to look specifically at the issues of disengaging youth from violent practices in the Darfur region. However, I found it difficult to find any Darfur-specific information and the following articles relate more youth engagement in economic activities in the African region as a whole.*