
EX-COMBATANT MIGRATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DDR A CASE STUDY OF UGANDA

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David Baxter and Alexandra Burrall

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1. MIGRATION STUDY OVERVIEW

In Uganda, an estimated 1 in 5 ex-combatants has migrated from their community of origin since their return to civilian life.¹ While many Ugandans migrate due to economic, land and marital factors, migration of ex-combatants appears to be driven not only by these causes, but also in large part by factors unique to their ex-combatant status and directly linked to their association and time spent with a rebel group. Our study “Moving to Catch Up: Migration of Ex-combatants in Uganda”² hypothesized that the high levels of migration among ex-combatants and the causes of that migration would have implications on the effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming. Therefore, by extension, migration should likely be incorporated into the DDR design. This paper focuses on the DDR, and specifically reintegration, implications of this migration, and is a synopsis of that work which can be accessed in full at <http://www.tdrp.net/en/studies.html>.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

There has been a general lack of understanding regarding how forced and voluntary migration impacts on the reintegration of ex-combatant populations in Uganda and throughout the Great Lakes Region of Africa. This has carried over to a lack of clarity on how DDR programming for these populations might be improved. This knowledge gap has been identified through several studies conducted by the TDRP Quality Enhancement Facility on the DDR processes, and documented in literature related to the subject, all of which point to potential differences in migration patterns between ex-combatants and civilian non-combatants.

The purpose of the study was to provide a better understanding for policy makers and service providers of mobility and migration among ex-combatants and the implications for DDR programming in Uganda. The study was informed by a scoping study on migration in Uganda conducted in March 2011 also by the Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP) of the World Bank.

This study had the following specific objectives:

1. To analyze push/pull migration factors of ex-combatants in Uganda, with a specific focus on social and 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.

¹ Finn, Anthony. (2011) Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Survey Report to the Amnesty Commission, Uganda.

² Baxter, D. and Burrall, A. (2011). “Moving to Catch Up: Migration of Ex-combatants in Uganda. The World Bank. Retrieved 1/8/2011, from <http://www.tdrp.net/en/studies.html>.

The study focused special attention on social factors both within communities of origin and new communities of resettlement to uncover some of the lesser-discussed factors driving migration for this particular population. Overall, special attention was given to:

- Initial and current social reintegration within the family and community;
- Initial and current economic reintegration in the community;
- Identification of primary causes and factors related to migration, namely push and pull factors for migration of ex-combatant populations;
- The areas of intersection between these factors including economic, social and cross cutting factors such as land;
- Access to sustainable livelihoods, including training, education and employment opportunities; and
- Any convergence or specific areas of divergence that can be identified between ex-combatant and civilian non-combatant migration experiences.

1.2 Methodology

To accomplish these objectives, the study delved into the factors impacting the migration decisions of 121 reporters who had migrated since their demobilization in five regions of Uganda. Qualitative, face-to-face interviews were conducted May – July 2011 in Arua, Gulu, Kampala, Kitgum and Mbale districts. Of the 121 interviewees, 87 were male and 34 female. The respondents represented seven rebel groups, which had operated in Uganda including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), West Nile Bank Front (WNBF), Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), Uganda National Rescue Front 2 (UNRF II), Force Obote Back Army (FOBA) and the National Resistance Army (NRA). Most participants had spent time with three of Uganda's most populous rebel groups, LRA (51 reporters), ADF (32 reporters), and WNBF (32 reporters). Additionally, 20 other ex-combatants, four community focal point volunteers (CFPs), and other individuals including Ugandan Amnesty Commission, World Bank and NGO staff and consultants were interviewed for the purposes of providing context and verification.

2. FACTORS IMPACTING EX-COMBATANT MIGRATION

Our research first analyzed the push/pull migration factors of migrating ex-combatants in Uganda. Through this analysis social, economic and intrinsically intertwined socio-economic patterns emerged. We found that the causes of mobility that are unique to ex-combatants stem primarily from stigma or fear due to former and present affiliation with rebel groups, extended rebellion-driven absence from communities of origin, the combination of stigma and absence compounding economic and land challenges, diminished opportunities due to interrupted life trajectories, DDR programs and services, influential and extensive ex-combatant networks, and changing societal attitudes toward acceptance and reconciliation 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. In fact, the primary reason for ex-combatant migration was economic hardship. However, many interviewees reported being forced to move for reasons specific to their former involvement with rebel groups, many of which often impacted their economic situation. Rebel group, sex and age further delineated migration experiences.

Following the passage of the Amnesty Act in 2000, word traveled across Uganda and deep into the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo 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 camps for internally displaced persons, 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. Unique factors impacting ex-combatant migration included:

Push Factors (in descending order of frequency reported)

- Extreme stigma;
- Economic challenges including lost years of work experience, employment income and education, reducing their current opportunities (depending on age joined);
- Grabbing or selling of land due to either extended absence, assumed death or stigma;
- Violence or threats from family or community members;
- Loss of all material positions including destruction of house (having to start over from nothing), which was similar to non-combatant experiences in areas devastated by war, but specific to reporters in areas where houses of known rebels had been targeted either by the government or by the community members. Any documentation of land rights was often also lost during this time/struggle;
- Nothing to return to/family relocated or deceased due to violence or illness;
- Fear of re-abduction or death if found by rebel group;
- Felt watched by the government;
- Long-term injuries impacting ability to do certain work, such as farming or other physical labor jobs; and
- Bad memory associations with an ex-combatant's home, community or local environment.

Pull Factors (again in descending order)

- The hope of economic opportunities in larger cities. A few had tangible opportunities, most frequently a security guard job offer in Kampala;
- Assistance through housing, employment, or monetary support by family members, friends or community. Male ex-combatants often found friends through reporter networks in Kampala, which many utilized for housing and informal employment opportunities. The large mosques and churches in larger cities that are known to assist those in need were also a draw;
- Lack of stigma against those in rebel groups was most often found in areas less affected by fighting which allows ex-combatants to be more open about their past;
- Anonymity, found often in larger cities, was a draw for those not open about their past;

- Desire to be close to the Amnesty Commission headquarters in Kampala in the event that additional funds or services would be made available;
- Availability of or access to land;
- Marriage. While it is common for Ugandan women to move for marriage to other communities, many ex-combatant women 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;
- Proximity to original location allowing the ex-combatant to walk or move there cheaply;
- Increased security over ones home community; and
- Offer of additional education or skills building from NGOs/others in larger cities.

Expectedly, a combination of factors often emerged from the individuals' choices, so factors should also be looked at in combination as well as individually. Certain factors were often found in clusters such as stigma, land, and fear for physical safety; lack of land, home and economic challenges; community stigma and marriage challenges; etc.

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 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 reported moving 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.

It is also notable that, since 2000 with the passage of the Amnesty Act and the formation of the Amnesty Commission (AC), there has been significant progress 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 return migration in the years to come.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR DDR IN UGANDA

The exploration of push and pull migration factors informed both the second and third objectives of the study: to explore any impact of DDR programming on migration of ex-combatants in Uganda and 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. These two objectives explore the interplay between DDR and migration, as well as the implications for not recognizing this relationship. The research found that migration has been exacerbated by DDR policies, but on the flip side, reintegration programs through DDR may also at times not achieve their goals in part because the ex-combatants are moving and thus the programming assumptions are not accurate. 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.

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 percent of heads of household living in rural Uganda had migrated at least once. 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 DDR 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 among this population.

3.1 DDR Aspects Which Exacerbate Existing Challenges, Elevate Risks and Vulnerability, or Encourage Additional Migration

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.

3.1a Misleading Assurances

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 even 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 AC officials and by Give Me A Chance 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.

3.1b Inflexible Reinsertion Policies

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.

Ex-combatants who transited through reception centers indicated that they 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 of these cases this increased community tensions and forced these individuals to endure a tortuous process of return, sometimes for several years, before they ultimately uprooted themselves and their families to struggle to begin anew in another destination.

For younger reporters who were largely demobilized through reception centers, the vast majority 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, the situation at home had been negative before joining the rebellion, which may in part 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 had been killed, wanted nothing to do with the reporter, or wanted 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.

3.1c Poor Communication Strategies

The Amnesty Commission has become synonymous with assistance in reporter circles and its 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. Again, added consideration for migration implications in future DDR planning, could avoid the exacerbation of reintegration challenges for these individuals. It is additionally critical that assistance in fact not be given to those waiting at the office over those that stay in their communities.

3.2 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.

3.2a Reintegration is a Fluid Process

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 community focal points. 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.

3.2b Lack of Nationwide Tracking Mechanism

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.

3.2c The Elevated Susceptibility to Stigma of Female Reporters

Also 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 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.

3.3 Impact of Migration on DDR Programs

The study further looked 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. The lack of attention to migration and resulting expectation that reporters will remain in their community of initial return creates incorrect assumptions for service provision, resource allocation, successful follow-up and levels of support needed in a particular community going forward. Overall the lack of recognition significantly undermines the reintegration planning by creating inaccurate assumptions in both initial and communities of migration, and leaves challenges unaddressed that could be planned for in advance.

3.4 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.

4. LESSONS

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 should work to incorporate an ex-combatant migration strategy into all DDR programs. DDR programming should include an awareness of the causes of migration and a strategy to respond to migration of ex-combatants. Second, social and economic reintegration support should be tailored to both communities of origin and to communities receiving migrant ex-combatants. One aspect of this is supporting reporters who desire to stay in their communities as well as those who wish to return to their communities. This strategy should be incorporated into planning on reinsertion and reintegration. Finally, DDR commissions should be structured to track and support migrant ex-combatants, as well as their host communities.

4.1 An Ex-combatant Migration Strategy and Its Implications Should Be an Integral Component of All DDR 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. 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. In addition, DDR planners should incorporate an assessment of planned DDR actions through a migration lens for determining whether or not these actions encourage unnecessary migration.

One example of the need to incorporate migration concerns is found at the reinsertion stage. 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 their home community. 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 as for others, this may cause further trauma, community conflict, and forced, rapid migration. 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 stunt reintegration, potentially compromising the entire DDR effort. 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.

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. 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. Eliminating this pull factor altogether requires that Amnesty Commission in fact 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. 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. Enhanced clear communications to accurately inform reporter expectations are also important for overall DDR programming.

4.2 Social and Economic Reintegration Support should be Tailored to Both Communities of Origin and Communities Receiving Ex-Combatants

It is clear that significant levels of migration are present in many post-conflict settings. As such social and economic reintegration support should be planned to support ex-combatants in both their communities of origin as well as in communities receiving ex-combatants. Migration is not necessarily a negative, and some who migrate are better off. However, reporters who desire to remain in or return to their communities should be supported in that endeavor. Within DDR programming this can and does take a variety of forms, including vocational training, educational support, peace and reconciliation, outreach staff, legal assistance, and more. In framing support programming it will be important to account for differentiated needs by rebel group or region, gender and age.

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. 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 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.

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 where 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 reintegration. 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 Ugandan Army (UPDF).

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.

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, disputes clearly resulting from discrimination merit legal assistance. Additionally, 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.

4.3 DDR Commissions Should be Structured to Enable Tracking and Support of Migrant Ex-Combatants, and Support of Host Communities.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.