**Connecting Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Realities**

Hans Rouw

“Congo is a discourse. In reality it does not exist,” former combatant in Butembo, North Kivu. [[1]](#footnote-1)

**Brief conflict analysis**

Parts of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), known as the Kivus, have been plagued by complex cycles of conflict for decades. During the 1990s, discrepancies between traditional and state law related to land ownership in Kivu enabled a few to grab resource rich land at the cost of many. This also escalated existing ethnic tensions, which were exacerbated by an influx of refugees and Interhamwe[[2]](#footnote-2) from Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. The weakening of Mobutu’s rule over Zaire in the 1990s encouraged Zaire’s neighbours to support the rebellion led by Kabila and his Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo(AFDL) in an attempt to access Zaire’s mineral wealth. Kabila’s AFDL, joined by Tutsi militias, marched from the east to Kinshasa and ousted President Mobutu from power in May 1997, renaming the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Once in power, Kabila attempted to curb the influence of his former allies, demanding that Rwandan and Ugandan troops leave the country. In response, Uganda and Rwanda supported the formation of a new rebel movement, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie(RCD), which occupied eastern DRC and ignited Congo’s Second War in August 1998. Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia supported Kabila, whilst Rwanda and Uganda backed various opposing rebel groups. In July 2002, a peace agreement was signed stipulating the withdrawal of the Rwandan Army, and the dismantling of ex-FAR (Forces Armées Rwandaise) and Interahamwe. In September that same year, a similar agreement was signed with Uganda. All previous agreements were combined into one document, referred to as the ‘Final Act’, which was signed in Sun City, South Africa in April 2003. The estimated death toll related to violent conflict in eastern DRC since 1998 ranges from 2.5 million to 5.4 million,[[3]](#footnote-3) with hundreds of thousands[[4]](#footnote-4) of people being internally displaced as a consequence of war.

Despite the peace agreement, violence in the Kivus continued, most notably by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Congrès National pour la Défense de la Peuple(CNDP) and various Mai-Mai groups.*[[5]](#footnote-5)* At present, Kivu still remains insecure. For instance, in May and June 2012, the Congolese army was involved in fierce stop-start fighting in North Kivu province, with renegade soldiers loyal to former rebel commander Bosco Ntaganda forcing about 100,000 civilians to flee for their lives.[[6]](#footnote-6) More generally, eastern DRC suffers from weak governance and security actors who are largely incapable and/or unmotivated to protect the civilian population. The renewed UN mission, MONUSCO, aims to assist the government of DRC with a Protection of Civilians mandate, but is unable to consistently provide protection throughout the vast geographical area of eastern DRC.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In North Kivu, many of the estimated population of about 5 million[[8]](#footnote-8) people suffer on a daily basis and consequently have lost trust in the capacity of their government to resolve the issues facing this part of the DRC. These issues include violent ways of accessing eastern DRC’s abundant resources, myriad armed groups, the reintegration of militia groups into the national army, ethnic conflicts, under development, ongoing land disputes and large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.

**Conflict transformation: the missing links**

“Not knowing the problem is the problem” (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 25).

Two key challenges to address in fragile states like the DRC are the lack of social cohesion, and the need to restore confidence and links between civilians and their government. Much more than it damages buildings and physical infrastructures, conflict destroys trust and relationships, as well as the capacity and will of people to work together. These intangible qualities must be rebuilt if peace is to be sustainable. The necessary work, then, is done most effectively when language, culture, and understanding of the effects of conflict are acknowledged and shared. In other words, it is vital to know the problem to be able to actually address it constructively. Restoring confidence between civilians and governance actors is needed to create forms of cooperation designed to address issues of conflict together. However, in the words of CRC’s current coordinator: ‘the members of government are another country’ (Rouw and Willems, 2009: unpublished field notes).

When they first began their work in 1993 in Bunia, North Kivu, the founders of the Centre Résolution Conflits (CRC) realised that local insight and trust are key issues. Formally registered as a Congolese non-governmental organisation (NGO) in 1997, CRC expanded its work to Nyakunde and Beni from 2004 onward. Initial CRC activities had a general focus on teaching conflict transformation skills to communities, after which attention became specifically focussed on youth populations because they are the leaders of tomorrow. Since then, CRC activities have expanded to include media sensitisation, local negotiations with militia leaders and support to displaced people.

CRC now works on all these issues throughout North Kivu and Ituri with a 17 member full-time staff, a network of part-time staff and large groups of volunteers, who participate in local task forces. A strong religious faith provides the facilitative framework within which the organisation operates. Through the course of its work, CRC staff has experienced the horrors of the raging conflicts in Kivu first hand: when the organisation’s deputy director and his family were murdered in 2002, and again in 2004, when their office in Bunia was ransacked by militia forces.

Since its inception, CRC has been dedicated to creating conflict transformation activities that are contextually appropriate and aim to mitigate the violent components of conflict in eastern DRC. The organisation has always concentrated on uncovering the problems of local communities and worked towards local solutions. “The main thing is to start with grassroots people,” says CRC co-founder, Kongosi Onia Mussanzi, who goes on to explain that, “when we used to talk with people, we used to give the example of a river, and if the river is polluted, you can’t start if it is polluted from the source. You can’t say now we are here, let us start working here. You have to go to the source, and from there, you go slowly down the river. And thus peace means starting with the grassroots, dealing with the people who are living the impact of the conflict” (Cairns, 2011: 5). CRC believes that befriending enemies and teaching people how to resolve conflict in peaceful ways is the only sustainable approach to ending war and rebuilding community life. In short, people are part of the problem and therefore must be part of the solution.

As militia groups are the primary source of violence in the conflicts in eastern DRC, international responses to the challenges of militia violence have focused on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. A myriad of rebel groups have operated in North Kivu in the last decade. For example, there is the Rwandese Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP); there also have been Uganda’s Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Mai-Mai militias, such as the Patriotes Resistants Congolais (Pareco). The Mai-Mai were established in the absence of any other source of protection as a reaction to the foreign or proxy forces operating in eastern DRC. Over time, some of these groups turned war into a profitable business by controlling mines and getting involved in banditry.

The DDR programme in the Kivu’s can be divided in three strands: the Commission Nationale du Désarmament, de la Démobilisation et de la Réinsertion (CONADER); the international Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (DDRRR) programme; and the programme for demobilising child soldiers. In 2008, after the signing of the Goma Agreement between 22 militia groups and the DRC government, the Amani[[9]](#footnote-9) DDR programme also started in the Kivus.

DDR programmes often have a difficult time connecting with local realities in ways that create sustainable solutions to the threat of armed groups, especially in terms of reintegration issues. However, it is vital to understand ‘the “laws of the bush” ... in order to break the cycle of returning to the militia. Reintegration must connect to life experienced by the combatants’ (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 35). As an evaluation of the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme[[10]](#footnote-10) (MDRP) also notes:

Experience shows that the design of reintegration programmes should, as a matter of priority, include a clear understanding of the social, cultural, economic and political dynamics of both ex-combatants and the recipient communities. An understanding of these aspects should inform the planning of a reintegration programme and hence its sustainability. More often, however, DDR programmes have been designed with little or no consideration for either ex-combatants or the communities they are to be reintegrated into (Alusala, 2011: iv).

In contrast, CRC operates community-based programmes that work both with ex-combatants and their recipient communities, supporting former combatants in being accepted by their communities, as well as providing a source of livelihood for these people and their families. In particular, as indicated in an interview with 12 NGOs at a meeting on 12 November 2009 in Butembo, CRC works within an integrated community-based model that taps deep into a community’s voluntary capacity for rebuilding itself because “...international strategies were ‘interventions’, whereas solutions should be more home grown and aim for a longer term. There should be more connections between the demobilised and the communities of integration” (Rouw and Willems, 2009: unpublished field notes). Through this approach, CRC has become a key link between communities, local government authorities in eastern DRC and militia groups in the bush, facilitating numerous negotiations for the return of armed militia members and child soldiers.

**The CRC approach**

CRC has developed a clear theory of change: by reducing the number of active combatants and sustainably reintegrating them, the level of violence in communities will be reduced, allowing for the broader community development necessary for lasting peace. Rather than DDR, CRC uses an RDD approach—reintegration, disarmament and demobilisation—because it is the effectiveness of the community reintegration process that influences militia members to want to disarm, as well as secures their long term demobilisation. CRC assisted the disarmament and demobilisation of 4,276 combatants (3,532 men; 270 women; 474 children), of whom 1,334 were reintegrated into cooperatives; 1,078 into the police; 1,120 into the army and 774 given other kinds of reintegration assistance (Gillhespy and Hayman, 2011: 14).

Based on past experience, CRC’s current work primarily focuses on an established process of engaging with militia groups. First and foremost, this means building credibility and trust with these armed groups. Sensitisation then needs to take place with both the militias and the recipient communities. Sensitisation here means “...knowing all sides of the conflict and being able to understand all sides. The emphasis should be on what people want out of their life” (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 34). Negotiating the surrender of militia groups then follows after sensitisation has taken place.

In January 2008, CRC began contacting armed groups in order to address increasing levels of violence in select communities in North Kivu. Initial contact always takes place through a *port de parole*, or someone who is familiar to the group and trusted, such as family members or friends of key militia leaders or members. Once contact has been established, a CRC staff person speaks with the key person on the phone in order to arrange a first meeting, which takes place in a neutral venue. On average, three or four meetings are necessary to gain trust and build credibility. However, the timeframe for these meetings differs in each case, depending on the complexity of the problems to be resolved.

The next step involves meetings between CRC and the broader membership of the militia group in order to talk about the goals of the group, their motivation for continuing to remain in the group, their outlook on life, and so on. Importantly, contact with key individuals and other militia members must be continually maintained, as such groups tend to split up, change their membership or leadership, or change alliances between militia groups. Ongoing engagement is also the way to stop the cycle of re-recruitment by militias. As such, the CRC approach demands a lot of energy and resources, which is the case even before it becomes clear whether demobilisation and reintegration efforts will be successful.

Creating momentum for peace is closely linked to CRC’s overall approach, especially in terms of the organisation’s emphasis on RDD rather than DDR. That is, efforts to persuade militia members to leave the bush begin with talking through the possibilities and benefits of actual reintegration into the communities. This is deemed necessary to motivate militia members and show that returning home will provide them with other opportunities than are available to them in the bush. Significantly, this part of CRC’s process also addresses the fact that former combatants often stay in contact with their former colleagues who chose to remain with the militia group. This allows CRC to tap into the potential of former combatants as interlocutors for demobilisation and peace.

Through CRC’s engagement with (former) combatants before, during and after their RDD work, only 10 per cent of former combatants indicated that they were considering a return to the bush, whereas 58 per cent of former combatants who did not engage with the CRC process indicated that they were considering a return (Gillhespy and Hayman, 2011: 21). CRC’s RDD process adds value to the international DDR programmes in the Kivus precisely because they can engage (former) combatants and their communities within the context of their daily lives. Despite the fact that these former combatants all participated in a DDR *programme*, it becomes clear that facilitating the DDR *process*,as CRC approaches this, increases the chances of the DDR *programme* having more sustainable results.

In addition to the sensitisation stage (ie, persuading combatants to leave their militia groups and persuading their communities to accept them back), the CRC approach to reintegration includes four other key elements:

• Provision of a range of livelihood options, some of which are also open to members of the community

• Reparation programmes are sometimes included in the reintegration process, whereby former militia members build roads or other facilities to benefit the community

• Building social networks based largely on voluntary effort, which sustains the RDD process at the micro level over time

• Context specific indicators that measure success over the long term, not just at the point where a combatant leaves the militia group and disarms

In general, the period between being a combatant and becoming a respected community member is long and arduous. For example, according to a former combatant in Mwenga, North Kivu, social acceptance by the community may take up to more than five years in some cases (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 35). Combatants attempting to reintegrate into their local communities generally remain in limbo between civilian life and the bush for some time, in large part depending on their personal experiences and the time they spent as combatants.

This is exemplified by Lea.[[11]](#footnote-11) In a group discussion on reintegrating into civilian life, she showed the identity card she had obtained after she demobilised, whilst at the same time revealing the combat fatigues she was wearing under her traditional dress. In effect, this combination of civilian and militia life enables her to go either way, depending on how circumstances evolve for her (Rouw and Willems, 2010: 25). Lea’s position between both options suggests that the practical and social support that CRC provides is greatly needed.

**Organisational structures in CRC’s work**

CRC is a small organisation that aims to increase its scope and enhance the sustainability of its work. Therefore, CRC staff decided to branch out through initiatives such as task forces, radio shows and cooperatives. Such initiatives serve to multiply, deepen and extend the reach of CRC work.

***Establishing task forces***

Since 2004, through its community conflict resolution training programmes, CRC has encouraged each community to create a local peace committee. The ongoing relationships that have been built by participation in the local peace committees have created a framework through which CRC has been able to introduce the livelihood support component of its RDD process. CRC regularly follows up with these committees to monitor how they are working. In cases where a local peace committee is no longer active, CRC instead works with a local development organisation.

With additional funding from the Baring Foundation, since 2009 CRC has been able to build on some of its local peace committees to establish six larger task forces in Beni, Butembo, Bunia, Aveba, Mambasa, and Kasenyi-Tchomia. Each task force has an average of 12 members, who range from community and religious leaders to former child soldiers and even former militia commanders. The goal of these task forces is to bring together key community leaders who have been involved in addressing local conflicts, whilst ensuring that all sectors of the community are represented. Task force membership has remained consistent since they were first established, apart from the deaths of two members, one from natural causes and one who was killed whilst undertaking work for the task force. Task force members are trained by a three-person team from CRC that includes the heads of the human rights and ex-combatants programmes, as well as CRC director, Henri Bura Ladyi. These training sessions have a twofold purpose: to explain how a task force should report to CRC; and how to effectively evaluate their own work.

The Butembo Task Force has met on a weekly basis since 24 July 2009. Most other task forces meet together once a month. All of the task forces meet with CRC staff at regular intervals throughout the year (usually on a quarterly basis) and submit regular reports on their activities to CRC. Whilst the task forces primarily were created to assist in negotiating with militia groups, they have now taken on a wider role, acting as an early warning system for CRC and local level conflict resolution. As such, they have evolved into groups with an important role to play in supporting the recovery of their communities as they emerge from violent conflict: they help reduce violence and thus make development possible.

***Radio broadcasts***

In an area where communication and transportation services are very limited, radio is an important means of communication for CRC. Since 2009, CRC has been using radio intensively and effectively to encourage combatants to leave their armed groups. Between 2009 and 2011, 156 programmes have been broadcasted through three local radio stations: Radio Moto in Butembo; RTEB in Beni; and Radio Candip in Bunia. In particular, short slogans with strong, clear messages are regularly broadcast: “We can’t build our country living in the bush. We can’t build our country through violence. We can’t build our country through raping women” (Cairns, 2011: 16).

The power of using radio as a means to sensitise combatants is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that many who return to their villages immediately join the local radio club. In doing so, they create an effective link between the community and other combatants who are still active. Whilst those who have left no longer see their former colleagues, “Through the radio they can immediately address them with precision to show what they have found in the village and that they would do better to follow them” (*ibid*, 20). This kind of personal sensitisation makes it easier to demobilise large numbers of young militia members quickly. As one ex-combatant explains, “I can say I am Kidicho, I have been there with you, now I am here, you hear my voice, come to join me here. They even cite the name. You, I know you are there, I know you have been shot by the bullet. I know your wife. I know you are living on that mountain. I am already good here, you can come and join me” (*ibid*). Radio is, therefore, a direct way for ex-combatants to encourage their former colleagues to also return to their own communities.

***Joint civilian and ex-combatant cooperatives***

Another key component to CRC’s success has been the establishment of cooperatives that enable civilians and former combatants to work together on joint projects. Former combatants are provided with livelihood support and civilians are also included to prevent frustration and alienation. Perceptions of rewarding the perpetrator can emerge when only former combatants are given livelihood support and victims are left to their own devices. Moreover, these joint projects can help reduce prejudice on both sides whilst surrounding former combatants with social guidance and affirmation of acceptable moral behaviour. In some cases, ex-combatant membership in a cooperative is linked to making reparations to their local communities by rehabilitating local infrastructures.

With a current total of 24 cooperatives established since 2009, members are selected by the communities themselves. Initially, a cooperative has 30 members and receives US$ 2,000.00 in financial support from CRC. It is then up to members of the cooperative to decide if they wish to include new members, all of which have done so. In some cases, this has resulted in cooperatives having up to 200 members. On the one hand, this is a strong indicator of the success of this approach. But on the other, this poses challenges related to the organisation and financing of the cooperatives. Currently, CRC addresses this by restricting the number of core cooperative members, whilst enabling broader membership through micro finance schemes.

***A community-based approach***

CRC brings a deep, long-term commitment to the communities in which it works, which is facilitated by the task forces. This commitment is what convinces local communities to willingly support and contribute to CRC activities. Built up over years of engagement, CRC’s credibility with local communities has proven to be a crucial ingredient for making its work possible and successful. In adopting a thoroughly community-based approach, CRC aims to facilitate and empower former combatants and local communities to engage in self-help processes related to local development, as well as to enhance their own security. In general, CRC’s community-based approach seeks to involve a fully representative selection of local community interests and concerns, which is reflected in all of its activities.

More specifically, CRC’s approach to its community-based RDD process recognises that engaging with armed groups for peace is only possible by connecting with the reasons an armed group exists. The CRC approach is also based on the necessity of understanding communities in their own context and engaging them through social networks for peace. This can only happen constructively and sustainably when CRC’s work and networks connect with the day-to-day challenges of communities and former combatants alike. Perhaps the best evidence that CRC is largely successful in tapping into the day-to-day challenges faced by the communities in which they work is the fact that task force members put in large amounts of voluntary time, with a minimum of 4,432 hours per task force per year.[[12]](#footnote-12)

For example, whilst CRC’s livelihood activities primarily focus on former combatants and women, other community residents also have become involved because they see how these projects benefit their communities. At the same time, CRC’s radio club programmes have tapped into a deep community desire for peace and development, as well as provide a structure for constructive self-help rebuilding.

**Connecting insiders and outsiders for peacebuilding**

Reintegration and peacebuilding are complex and dynamic processes that require several different roles and responsibilities. Some of these are best played by insiders like CRC and their task forces, whereas others are better suited for outside actors, such as MONUSCO. Ideally, top-down and bottom-up components of DDR (or indeed RDD) should complement one another and add value. On the one hand, for example, CRC is able to bridge the gap between the concept of DDR and the actual practise in the field. The organisation is also able to link (former) combatants and their communities for sustained social and livelihood support in reintegration. On the other hand, the international community that supports DDR in eastern DRC is able to manage DDR facilities, register former combatants and give them identification cards, offer transport to DDR facilities and provide services, such as reintegration kits, training and sometimes development schemes. In short, information, working modalities, facilities and resources need to be shared between insiders and outsiders to attain the optimum mix of actions towards engagement for peacebuilding.

A practical example of effective insider-outsider cooperation was explained by CRC’s coordinator, Henri, during meetings at The Hague.[[13]](#footnote-13) After prolonged negotiation between CRC and a Mai-Mai group, their commander decided to go to a DDR camp run by MONUSCO. Pride and the potential loss of face made the commander decide that he would move his troops to the DDR site himself, rather than having them picked up from the bush by the UN. Henri, who was riding along with MONUSCO to pick up the combatants and was unaware of the commander’s decision, was called by the Mai-Mai and told that the convoy would be shot at if they proceeded further. In the end, Henri was able to defuse an escalating situation, due to his relation with both the Mai-Mai group and MONUSCO. Without Henri’s relations and knowledge of the situation, this event could have turned deadly. Without the support of outsiders like UN agencies, however, Henri would have had fewer options with which to negotiate with the Mai-Mai. In particular, the combination of DDR facilities and services provided by the UN and the facilitation of the process by CRC renders demobilisation a more attractive option for militias.

CRC’s contextual and incremental approach in eastern DRC is thus a vital component for both the national and international DDR programmes operating in this region. CRC needs external funding to do its work, but compared to costly[[14]](#footnote-14) international programmes this is a relatively minor investment with great benefits. For example, CRC spends roughly US$ 153.00 per former combatant (Gillhespy and Hayman, 2011: 28). This amount excludes the support given by other outsiders, such as the organisations mentioned below. In addition to the support CRC has received from Peace Direct (since 2004) and the Baring Foundation (since 2009), several other examples of the organisation’s working relationships with other international agencies include:

• Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO): provided seeds and agriculture kits and training in agriculture

• Handicap International: provided transportation support

• MONUSCO: joint work on sensitisation of combatants and transport to make contact with militia leaders

• UNDP: joint training, information sharing, and joint projects on road rehabilitation

• Save the Children/UNICEF: joint missions to rescue children from the bush

In effect, CRC operates on with a small budget but, in cooperation with outside actors, is able to create a tremendous added value for DDR and peacebuilding activities.

**Monitoring results and progress**

Accurate monitoring of results and the attribution of effects is often more difficult than evaluators dare to admit. For instance, how is it possible to measure the trust and credibility that has been built up by CRC? How can the potential effects of this trust and credibility for future actions be delineated? How can the precise effects of trust and credibility be measured in relation to past successes and failures? These and many other questions indicate the difficulties of accurately monitoring the results and progress of CRC’s work.

Nevertheless, funding and organisational learning require monitoring and evaluation, which CRC mainly does at the community level. In July 2009, for example, the Butembo and Beni Task Forces collaboratively developed indicators for measuring the achievement of CRC’s progress in reintegrating ex-combatants. These indicators were holistic ones that measured the extent of reintegration by how effectively the former combatants became a part of the community: by marrying into the community, building a house, sending their children to school, making a living and if they still believed in black magic. Black magic is an integral part of Mai-Mai organisational culture. Hence, measuring whether an ex-combatant continues to believe in black magic (or not) can serve to indicate the distance between former Mai-Mai militia members and the rituals of these groups.

Recognising that reintegration also involves action on the part of the community, the task forces included indicators that measured if the community supported the ex-combatants’ return. For example, this was done by measuring civilian perceptions of community security in general upon the return of combatants and civilian perspectives on returning combatants in particular. In addition, civilians were also asked what, if any, outside organisations have improved their situation.

**The impact of CRC’s work**

In terms of better understanding the impact of CRC’s work, it is important to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative measures of success. It is evident that negotiating and facilitating the return of militia members to their communities entails a high level of dedication and adequate resources before quantifiable results can be evaluated. This labour-intensive work also requires a significant degree of trust and confidence with both militia groups and their local communities, which takes time to grow and develop. However, once trust and confidence are established, this can provide inroads for actions that go beyond the narrowly defined goals related to DDR. For example, beyond the numbers of people who have gone through a DDR programme or the number of guns collected, trust and confidence can feed into reconciliation and conflict resolution activities, the formation of cooperatives and so on.

Despite these challenges, many quantitative results can be attributed to CRC’s work since they began engaging militia groups in 2008. The target of CRC’s RDD project was to demobilise 5,000 combatants and give them assistance with reintegration. CRC records currently indicate that 4,305 ex-combatants have been assisted over the past two years. An additional 445 combatants are also expected to be demobilised and reintegrated very soon. Overall, the network of CRC and its local partners now includes six task forces, 18 local peace committees, 24 cooperatives, 119 Radio Clubs, 16 livelihood projects and 21 families hosting former child soldiers. In addition to its RDD programme, CRC also aimed to assist 2,000 internally displaced persons and facilitate their return. This was greatly exceeded: CRC was able to assist 2,816 families, representing 14,121 persons in all.

CRC has also played a key role in reducing the number of armed militia groups active in North Kivu from nine to four, according to Blaise Kasongo, who manages the organisation’s ex-combatants programme (Cairns, 2011: 12). Thanks to CRC’s sensitisation work, armed groups have also stopped resisting the return of ex-combatants. At present, several are even negotiating with CRC to help their members leave the bush.

The qualitative impact of CRC’s work is perhaps best demonstrated by its six task forces. Whilst the task forces primarily were created to assist in reintegrating ex-combatants and displaced persons, they have now evolved to play many key roles within the community. For example, the task forces have become an authoritative local source of accurate information, including knowledge of other local groups and initiatives working in their communities. In some ways, the task forces have also come to serve as both the community’s memory and as a supervisor of the community. The task forces also function as problem solvers called on to deal with a wide variety of community problems. Individual members find their skills as mediators are in demand in resolving disputes. They have become a counter-balance to local government authority, helping to influence the behaviour of elected and appointed officials and hold them to account for their activities. The task forces likewise have become a focal point for local officials, drawing those officials into becoming involved in discussing and addressing the problems of peacebuilding in their communities.

As well as improving community security, these task forces have inspired communities to begin addressing their own economic and social needs through a variety of self-help activities. It is precisely for this reason that at some point friction may develop between CRC’s task forces and local governance actors, with governance actors potentially coming to see CRC as competition in the future. Thus, the qualitative impact of CRC’s work has been to peacefully transform conflicts between returning combatants and recipient communities, to tap into local potentials for conflict transformation, to monitor local dynamics through contextually-devised indicators and to counter rumours by providing verified facts and information.

***Testimonies to the impact of CRC***

There is ample evidence of the impact of CRC’s work from a range of different sources. Butembo-based journalist Edouard Pacifique, for example, views CRC’s reintegration activities from a unique perspective.[[15]](#footnote-15) He is a journalist with Radio Moto, which is run by the Catholic diocese of Beni-Butembo. He is also a member of the Butembo Task Force, a record-keeper for CRC and coordinates the radio club network known as ‘One for all and all for one’, which gathers each Saturday morning at Radio Moto for a two hour call-in show. He says that before Radio Moto and the Catholic Diocese decided to work in partnership with CRC, they thoroughly investigated CRC and found it shared the values of the organisation: integrity, faithfulness and a commitment to peace and development.

As a journalist, Pacifique knows many organisations working on demobilisation and claims that CRC’s approach is qualitatively different from all the others because they take a more process-oriented and holistic approach to their work. According to Pacifique, CRC’s goal is peace and development, unlike other organisations that say ‘give me money and then I make demobilisation’. CRC brings a sustained focus and commitment to its work that Pacifique does not see in other such organisations, as he explains:

They [CRC] are still there since the beginning, compared to other associations that just came and made a broadcast two or three times and then say, no, the project is over, we go, without reporting how many demobilised people they have and what they have done to demobilise them. But with CRC it is quite different, because CRC brings us to where the demobilised are and we see them. CRC shows how they are working there. CRC shows us what it has realised and we see that. That is the difference compared with the other organisations (Cairns, 2011: 10).

Additional testimony to the effectiveness of CRC’s approach comes from the president of radio club Manganga, who is a former combatant. He left the bush as a result of CRC’s media sensitisation and now leads a cooperative of ex-combatants that has received support from CRC. He has no regrets, as he says, because CRC has given them ‘the radio club and I am doing well and I hope the same for those who still stay there. Thanks to CRC, there is a change of mentality (for the community), a change in their thinking’ (*ibid*, 22).

Although he and others had left the bush, this ex-combatant went on to say that he and his demobilised colleagues remain in contact with others who were still there. They had a way of communicating and could meet occasionally, and when they did, the ones in the forest would ask, “How are you doing? Where you are? And how is the government behaving with you?” If there is no harassment, they are encouraged and decide themselves to leave the bush. As he continued to explain, “But if they understand things are going wrong, they don’t come out and even some who have decided to return will go back to the bush” (*ibid*, 24) He also said that CRC’s training sessions on peace and reconciliation helped greatly in building good relationships in the community: “Every time they are reminding us about good relationships and they keep teaching people about the benefits of living in harmony. As we follow this, we develop such relationships and so we remain in the community without harassment or problems” (*ibid*).

**Conclusions and recommendations**

Through a relationship with CRC that began in late 2004, Peace Direct has seen CRC develop from an organisation focused on training around 500 displaced people each year in peaceful coexistence with other people in their immediate environment, to an organisation whose mediation skills are called upon by local communities, international NGOs, multilaterals and local government officials across North Kivu.

According to CRC, “The optimum approach to DDR in DRC has not yet been achieved, but the essential components do exist, if resources and expertise are combined from international, national and local organisations. Organisations should be selected to fulfil particular roles based on cost-effectiveness, sustainability and contextual awareness” (Gillhespy and Hayman, 2011: 32). Creating added value based on actors’ various capacities and positions in society is exactly the point when looking for collaboration in the field of DDR. Both insiders and outsiders have (potential) roles defined by strengths and limitations. Only when this is realised and acted upon can substantial improvements in the field of DDR be expected.

Both local populations and outside donors are best served with independent and strategically oriented local NGOs that are prepared to make long-term commitments to the communities in which they work. Although long-term engagement and flexibility are necessary in fragile states, donor logic and management systems often do not allow for this. The success of DDR is, moreover, often measured in numbers of people who have gone through a DDR programme or in the amount of weapons collected. This does not account for questions of outcome and sustainability. Instead, locally appropriate indicators must also be devised together with local NGOs and the intended beneficiaries of any project.

Reintegration efforts should become part and parcel of the design of a DDR programme, and should start even before guns are handed in. It is indeed relevant to consider RDD, rather than DDR, to better highlight the importance of reintegration. CRC experience evidences the need to engage combatants on reintegration immediately after the first contact is made. Not only will this facilitate sustainable reintegration, but it will enhance the likelihood that those militia members who remain in the bush will decide themselves to return to their communities. As the work of CRC has also shown, reintegration efforts should be seen as an opportunity to further the development of entire communities, including embedding local peacebuilding mechanisms in the fabric of their societies.

The distinction made here between a DDR *programme* and a DDR *process* is helpful with regard to the complementary roles played by CRC and the international community in the field of DDR. The international community can run a DDR *programme* that aims to satisfy the needs of a DDR *process* as much as possible, but requires local initiatives to uncover and address DDR needs from within the local context. Organisations like CRC are capable of creating and sustaining the momentum for peace that is prerequisite for DDR to have a successful and sustainable effect. It is evident that CRC’s initiatives are perceived as relevant by local populations because they voluntarily spend large amounts of time and energy on CRC-related work. The international community therefore would be better served in its own DRR aims and objectives to reconsider the ways insiders and outsiders can work together and tailor their collective efforts to local security needs.

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1. Rouw and Willems, 2010: 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Hutu Interahamwe which fled into the DRC would later form the basis of the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For more detailed discussion, see: <http://www.hsrgroup.org/docs/Publications/HSR2009/2009HumanSecurityReport_Pt2_3_DeathTollDemocraticRepublicCongo.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/96849E3579EE3240C12577FC0044524A?OpenDocument>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘Mai Mai’is a collective term for self-defence militias claiming to fight for the safety and security of their local communities, as well as against foreign oppression. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bosco Ntaganda, also known as the ‘Terminator’ is the military commander of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple, (CNDP) and is wanted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for alleged war crimes. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The current UN mission, MONUSCO, was preceded by MONUC, which was put in place in 2000, after 50,000 people had been killed and 500,000 people had been displaced in Ituri (situated north of Kivus in Province Orientale). whilst MONUC established bases in Haut and Bas Uele districts, it could do little about the many other local conflicts raging in the area. For more information on MONUSCO, see: http://monusco.unmissions.org/. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See: http://www.provincenordkivu.org/presentation.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Amani programme was part of the national programme (ie, CONADER), but designed specifically for the Kivus. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The MDRP was a multi-donor programme that operated between 2002 and 2009 in the Great Lakes region and claims to have demobilised close to 300,000 combatants and supported 232,000 former combatants in their reintegration. For more detailed information, see: <http://www.mdrp.org/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For reasons of security this is not her real name. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This estimate of time is calculated on the basis of each member contributing two hours of their time per month (or in Butembo, per week) to attend task force meetings. However, members each contribute time between meetings to investigate problems, incidents and rumours reported to them. Thus the voluntary time spent by them likely is much greater than the estimate given (Cairns, 2011: 15). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This particular meeting was organised by the Dutch Peace, Security and Development Network on 01 December 2011 in The Hague. For more information, see: http://www.psdnetwork.nl/. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. A study done in 2008 calculates the average cost of DDR, based on 19 DDR programmes in 2007, at $1,434 per person (Escola de Cultura Pau, 2008: 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The following two paragraphs are largely based on Cairns, 2011: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)