

**Beyond Analysis; An Innovative Reintegration Strategy of Ex-combatants  
in a Failed State; the Central African Republic**

by

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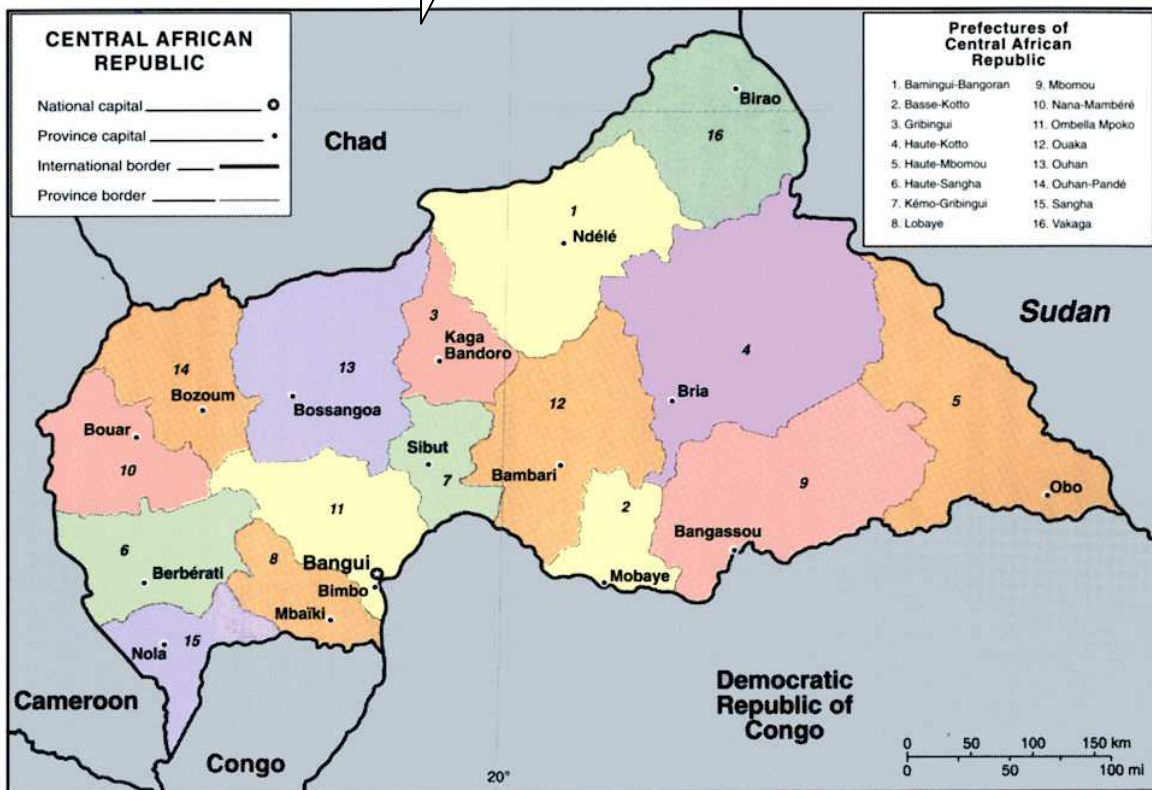
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**Prefectures**

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I dedicate this work to my family who suffered my absence while undertaking this work.

*Rugumire-Makuza E. 2013*

## **Disclaimer**

I certify that this work is original and has not been submitted to any university with a view of obtaining an academic qualification.

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Rugumire', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Rugumire-Makuza Emmanuel, 2013

## **Abstract**

The objective of this work was to produce an actionable reintegration strategy that could inform reintegration practice in the context of a conflict situation. We opted for a case study of the Central African Republic to explore the usefulness and limitations of international standards on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex combatants, in a post-conflict setting.

Documents on DDR processes in the Central African Republic were reviewed during the course of the research, to build arguments or to counter argue against arguments, to contextualise issues, to support suggested actions, or to highlight key issues. Interviews were held with key informants; National Reintegration Coordination Personnel, UNDP, local communities and ex-combatants.

The rationale of the DDR process is to contribute to peace and development of the CAR. A sustainable reintegration strategy contributes to this by facilitating ex-combatants to reintegrate within communities.

Understanding the context in which reintegration takes place is critical to conceptualising what a sustainable reintegration should be for that particular place. This study examined the socioeconomic and political challenges of CAR especially the problem areas.

This strategy concludes by proposing areas of reflection on reintegration that could help the process.

## Acronyms & Abbreviations

<b>APRD</b>	Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie	Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy
<b>BINUCA</b>	Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies en Centrafrique	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic
<b>CdP</b>	Comité de Pilotage	Steering Committee
<b>CAP</b>	Comité d'Approbation de Projet	Project Approval Committee
<b>CLDDR</b>	Comité Local de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réintégration	Local Committee for DDR
<b>CPJP</b>	Convention Pour la Justice et la Paix	Convention for Justice and Peace
<b>CPSK</b>	Convention Patriotique pour la Sécurité ti Kodro	Patriotic Convention for the Security of Motherland
<b>DDR</b>	Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réintégration	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
<b>DSRP</b>	Document de Stratégie de Réduction de la Pauvreté	Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper
<b>FDPC</b>	Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain	Patriotic Front for the Central African People
<b>FLISM</b>	Front pour la Libération et l'Indépendance de la Sangha Mbaéré	Liberation Front for the Independence of Sanga Mbaere
<b>GoRCA</b>	Gouvernement Centrafricain	Central African Government
<b>IDDRS</b>	International Disarmement, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards	
<b>MLCJ</b>	Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice	Movement of Centrafrican Liberators for Justice
<b>MICOPAX</b>	Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en Centrafrique	Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central Africa
<b>ONG</b>	Organisation Non-Gouvernementale	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>PDD</b>	Pôles de Développement	Development Axes
<b>PE</b>	Partenaire Exécutant	Executing Partner
<b>PBF</b>	(Fonds de Consolidation de la Paix)	Peace Building Fund
<b>PNUD</b>	Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement	UNDP
<b>PRAC</b>	Projet de Réinsertion et d'Appui aux Communautés	Project for the Reinsertion and support to communities
<b>PTA</b>	Plan de Travail annuel	Annual Workplan
<b>RCA/CAR</b>	République Centrafricaine	Central African Republic
<b>RSS/SSR</b>	Réforme du Secteur de la Sécurité	Security Sector Reform
<b>THIMO</b>	Travaux à Haute Intensité de Main-d'œuvre	Labour Intensive Work
<b>UFR</b>	Union des Forces Républicaines	Union of Republican Forces
<b>UFDR</b>	Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement	Union of Democratic Forces for Unity
<b>VIH/SIDA</b>	Virus d'Immunodéficience Acquise/ Sida	HIV/AIDS
<b>EXC</b>	Ex-Combattants	Ex-combatant
<b>PZO</b>	Patriotes Zandés d'Obo	Zande Patriots of Obo
<b>ROY</b>	Rassemblement Oubanguien Yakoma	Union of Oubangian Yakomas
<b>UBB</b>	Union des Bandas de Bambari Et Bria	Union of Bambari and Bria Bandas

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## **1.0 Introduction:**

In a post-armed conflict setting, the disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion and reintegration (DDRR) of combatants is a necessary condition for the securing of the region of conflict without which humanitarian action and sustainable development cannot take place. Any programme of DDRR should be informed by a clear strategy, a logical design and a monitoring and evaluation system of the appropriate results. Such a strategy will enable to clearly establish a strong link between the key elements of the programme design; the services that are to be provided to achieve the DDRR process, the results and the best procedures to achieve these results. Additionally as a principle of connectivity (Ethics Module) DDRR is best served if it is mainstreamed into national development processes and locally owned. Equally sustainable reintegration of demobilised ex-combatants takes place in a community socio-dynamic. This strategy will explore how to anchor DDR processes into the community-social web.

## **1.1 Rationale:**

After the comprehensive Peace agreement of Libreville 2008, the warring factions in the Central African Republic (CAR) agreed to undertake a peace process that would among things include a comprehensive DDR process for different armed groups as a way of ensuring lasting peace. Even from the beginning, the project was beset with various challenges. Lack of funding meant that the programme started one year later, some armed factions refused to be participate in the DDR process and resumed hostilities. They were to later regroup under the banner of ‘SELEKA’ and capture state power in March 2013. After capturing power SELEKA agreed to continue respecting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of Libreville and undertake a comprehensive DDR process.

The stated objective of the current reintegration process is:

*“to contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in the country by providing reinsertion options for the socio-economic reintegration of demobilised ex-combatants”*

(Stratégie Nationale de Réintégration, p.6 2012)

This objective, as we shall later on demonstrate misses certain key aspects of reintegration. We hope this strategy will fill the gaps in a creative way.

In order to ensure a sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants it is important to take a long-term and comprehensive approach of the process that takes into account of the recovery and reconstruction of an often fractured and disorganised post-conflict civil society. This implies therefore, that in addition to the economic aspects of providing reinsertion support to ex-combatants, taking into consideration of the links to the social cohesion and networks as well as community recovery of the communities to which the demobilised ex-combatants will reintegrate is critical. An integrated sustainable community development approach supported by the state and development partners is necessary.

It is especially important to specifically target vulnerable groups such as child ex-combatants, women and girls associated with the conflict and disabled ex-combatants. Elements of social embeddedness and vulnerable groups are lacking in the current DDR processes. Our strategy proposes a way in which these missing elements can be included, and an enlarged objective of a *strategy that should lead to a cohesive, inclusive and equitable society that is fully engaged in all aspects of development.*

## **2.0 The Central African Republic (CAR) Context:**

Any peace process is informed and by extension any disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process should be informed by the context of the country/region that gave birth to the conflict. The Central African Republic context which forms the backdrop to this strategy is composed of historical socioeconomic political and cultural aspects that are crucial to understanding the causes of the conflict and the possible solutions thereof.

### **2.1 A brief History of the Central African Republic:**

The difficulty of analysing the history of CAR especially of finding a common unifying thread lies in the multiplicity of actors, motivations and the ensuing events which at first glance may appear disparate. Yet the long arm of history has continued to influence the recurrent conflicts, attempts at peace-building up to today.

Pre-Independence history of the Central African Republic was marked by recurrent conflicts and impoverishment that brought untold suffering to the population; slavery, forced labour at the hands of French colonial concessions, flight from inter-tribal raids, and several epidemics did a lot of damage to the lives of the Centraficans. Between 1927-1960 (when CAR gained independence) history records several rebellions; reactions to the oppressive regime of French Trading Companies, purveyors of French colonisation in the Upper Congo (Kalck 1970).

Post-independent Central African Republic did not fare any better; successive governments forcefully subdued the population while enriching themselves on the vast mineral resources that the country boasts of. Binoua J sums up this period thus;

‘In 45 years therefore, 20 coup d’états or coup attempts, 7 constitutions, 20 governments, 450 ministers have participated in the governance of Central Africa. More than a dozen civil disobediences and strikes for salary arrears payment, flight of several big companies and abandon of Aid support on several occasions has led to the worsening situation of the country’

Several theories have been advanced to explain the perpetual cycles of violence that CAR has experienced;

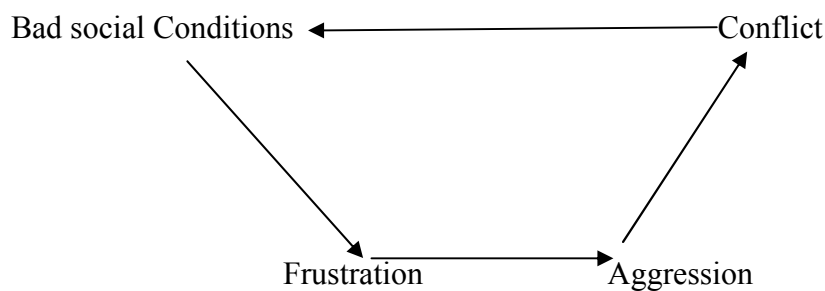
The recurring CAR crisis is a result of the incomplete construction of the ‘nation-state’ at independence and a lack of a ‘socialising project’ that unifies all centrafricans. It would

appear that the country never took advantage of the founding father’s vision. Barthelemy Boganda, the founding leader had a rich vision of a unified CAR. Mysteriously assassinated on the eve of independence coupled with a shambolic independence process which was contested by powerful French citizens living in Bangui sowed the seeds of discord that would later lead the country to depths of violence. Borrowing from Weberian theory of the state, it is easy to see that post-independence Central Africa was built on a fragmented society superstructure, with different tribes having little in common, except the flag and national anthem.

Another theory posits that the CAR situation derives from the fact that the country never really got its ‘independence’. France the former colonial master kept a grip on all political processes to serve its own interests, sometimes using neighbouring countries to exert influence. This theory is lent credibility by the fact that no Central African leader came to power or was deposed from power without French military support.

Other scholars have tried to explain the prevalent crisis by arguing that the acute poverty and lack of security via an absent state forced the population to take things into their own hands fighting against successive oppressive governments. This argument reverberates with Coleman’s rationality of conflict;

**Coleman’s boat**



The theory of fragile states with large spaces takes Coleman’s argument further a notch to explain the causes of insecurity in the North East of the Central African Republic and why it could be a danger to the whole region. Patrick Stewart argues:

*“Poor states with large spaces and non-governable regions are not only a burden to their people but also a threat to regional economies and security. Such areas are susceptible for exploitation by terrorist groups, tyrants and international criminals”*

There are other arguments to explain the situation in CAR; our objective restricts us to a global understanding of the key causes of the crisis so as to frame our strategy, well aware of the multi-dimensionality of conflict; there is never a single cause or explanation of a national conflict, but conflict often has deeper and different connotations, and understanding from different stakeholders.

One of the theories evoked the challenges of consolidating statehood in large uncontrolled areas, and to understand how the vastness of CAR has often worked against it we briefly look at its geography.

## 2.2 A brief geography of the Central African Republic

Situated in the heart of Africa between 2<sup>o</sup>10' latitude North, 14<sup>o</sup>25' and 27<sup>o</sup>27' longitude, at 623,000sq km, CAR is a large country; bigger than Continental France its former colonial master. It is bordered by Chad to the North, South Sudan and Sudan in the East, The Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo in the South and Cameroun in the West. The Central African Republic is composed of seven regions, each of which could be a small country of its own, and 15 prefectures which are the administrative units of the central government.

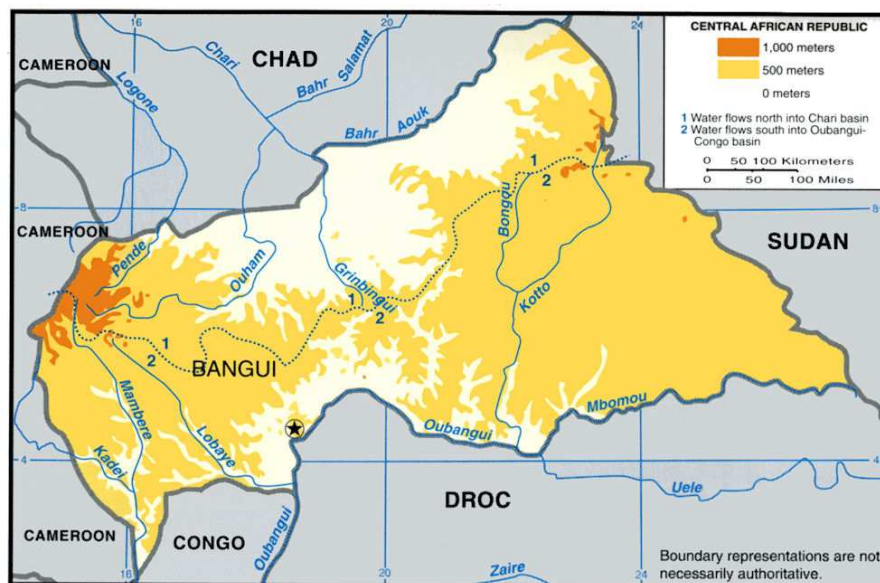
CAR's location is important in understanding the recurrent conflicts; in the East and North East CAR is almost inaccessible. The spillover effect of conflicts from neighbouring Chad, DRC and the Darfur region of Sudan, have created breeding ground for rebellions in the North East and East of the Central African Republic. Currently the South East is the haven of Ugandan Warlord, Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).



Figure 1 Road to Kaga-Bandoro cut-off by rains

The Central African Republic has two river systems; the Chari and its tributaries which flow northwards and pour into Lake Chad and the Oubangui-Congo that flows southwards and eventually ends in the Atlantic Ocean. The vegetation is lush tropical forest in the south and

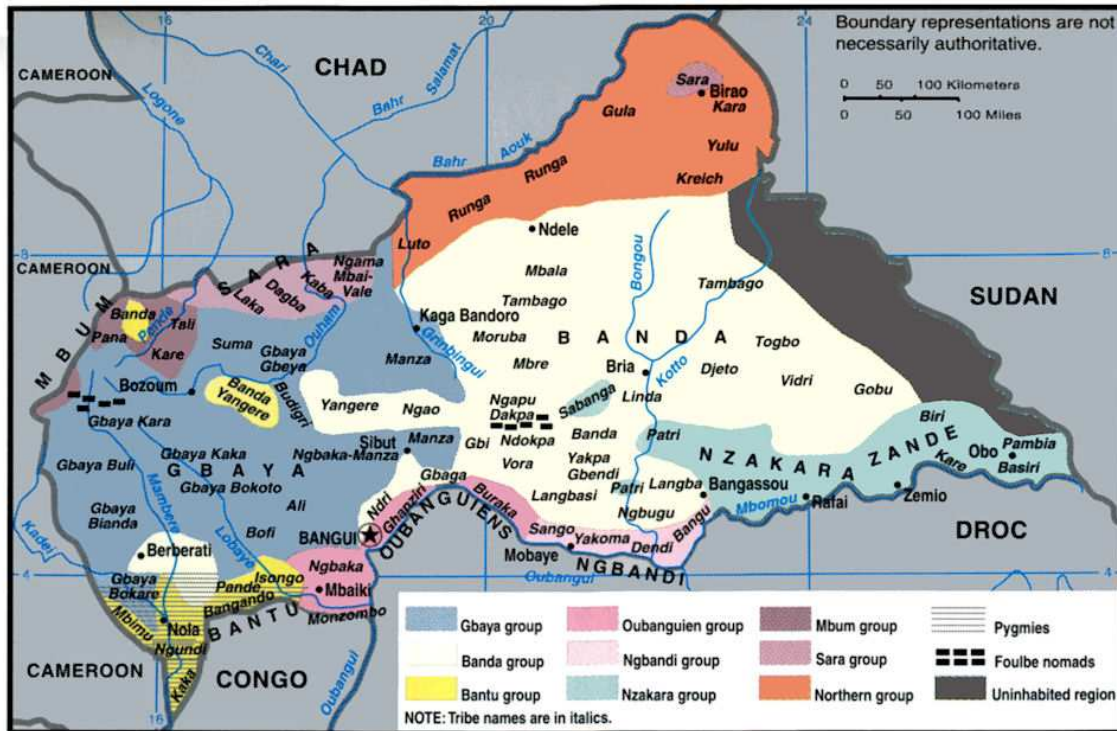
central regions changing to Savana grassland as one moves north towards Chad. The climate is hot and humid with two lengthy rainy seasons. The large space and lack of infrastructure and the rainy seasons cut off access to half of the country for almost five months. The Central African Republic is sparsely populated with 4.5 million habitants, of which a million live in Bangui, the capital city. The normal discourse is that CAR's landlockedness contributes to its impoverishment, with the nearest maritime port (Douala, Cameroun) being 600 Km away. This ignores the strategic location of the country at what could be the crossroad of Africa. The hinterland that CAR could serve, were it to develop its commercial and trade potential is enormous.



Topography

## 2.3 Society and Culture

With respect to the Central African Republic, it would be difficult to talk about a homogenous 'society' rather more like 'societies'. Movements of ethnic groups fleeing difficult conditions of famine, wars and epidemics led to an extremely diversified mix of ethnicity (Bigo 2005;13). Thus we find the Gbaya and Banda grouping of Oubangi, the Saras of the Goaga kingdom and Bantu groups (Pande, Mbimou, Kalka of upper Sangho) and the Lisongo, Ngabka in Lobaye in the south of CAR. Mbororos a Fulani group of pastoralists are found in the East and North of the country. Additionally marriage exchanges formed other groups of mixed ethnicities; Baya-Kaka, Ngabka-Manjia, Ngabka-Ma-Bo etc in the east and central CAR.



### Ethnic Divisions

The conquering groups are even more difficult to categorise because they often have corresponding brethren in the bordering countries; the Nzakara, Azande and Abandia. CAR is estimated to have 80 ethnic groups divided into five main groups; Baya 33%, Banda 27%, Sara 10%, Mandjia 13%, M'boum 7%, M'baka 4% Yakoma 4% and the rest accounting for 2%. Although each tribe has its language, the country largely speak Sango... although in the North East, Arabic is the lingua franca and inhabitants there do not know Sango. For a long time, ethnicity was not a problem, until in the early 80s when it was introduced into the politics of CAR through the tribalisation of the security forces.

Nevertheless there are several strong shared cultural points; a strong patrilineal society (Bigo 1988) and according to Bigo, this patrilineage is the skeleton of social structure. The structure of society is important when analysing local power dynamics, an important element when proposing strategies for reintegration. A patrilineal society will often undermine participation of women in key decision making. Thus ways of addressing this challenge cannot be undertaken without first understanding how society is organised. Additionally the village chief is very important in determining governance of the society, and should consequently be included among the key stakeholders in the reintegration processes.



### **3.0 Political and socio-economic challenges:**

Development challenges in the Central African Republic are enormous. The country has never experienced sustained growth and development. Highly indebted, CAR has had international financial Aid suspended twice in the last ten years, for non-payment of interest. The lowdown was that this led to mutinies by soldiers and strikes which further contributed to the eternal crisis.

Currently placed at 180 (out of 186) of the poorest nations (Human Development Report 2013), the average growth rates for the last five years has been less than 2.5%. The Central African Republic has never benefited from a substantial direct investment; lack of infrastructure, endemic corruption, insecurity and a bureaucratic system discouraged the development of the private sector. In 2011 CAR's position was the 183<sup>rd</sup> out of 185 countries in the doing business report. In 2012 CAR came last at 185<sup>th</sup>. It is only logical to suppose that the situation of the Central African Republic has worsened as a result of the most recent crisis. The preponderance of the informal sector has been pointed out (G.Lamb et al 2011, Alusala 2007), this means that CAR is effectively excluded from the global financial and commercial affairs.

Some authors have even gone as far as labelling the Central African Republic a failed state, a phantom state. The consensus is that the human development statistics on CAR make for a sombre reading. This picture is even made worse by a new, more realistic approach of estimating levels of poverty, which indicates that 86.4% of the population are destitute.

The terrible state of the economy in CAR is not a recent phenomenon. The country has in the past been involved in a cycle of crises; financial and political which it does not appear to know how to resolve. The dysfunctional and highly politicised security sector is both a cause and a symptom of the CAR's malaise. A closer examination of CAR's recent history reveals an infernal pattern; three times there have been national processes to resolve the politico-security situation, three times these attempts have failed, earning the country the unenviable sobriquet of a country of 'eternal recommencement'(Boubacar N'diaye 2009;118)

The last peace processes in 2008 were particularly costly to development partners leading to donor fatigue as evidenced by the lack of intervention and interest to the recent crisis. The whole country is judged to be in a humanitarian crisis. One of the reasons advanced for failure to resolve the crisis was the lack of implementation of the DDRR processes as proposed by the Global Peace Agreement of Libreville 2008.

## **4.0 DDR, SSR and Conflict in the Central African Republic:**

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes and the Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the Central African Republic did not escape the cycles of upheaval that have come to characterise the country. Three times in the last 10 years the country has tried to resolve the conflicts through DDR and SSR, three times they have failed (Caty et al 2007, Lombard 2012), the last episode occurring on March 25 2013, when SELEKA rebels overrun Bangui, the Capital City of CAR.

The last DDR undertaking took a long time to implement; whereas the Global Peace Agreement of Libreville was signed in 2008, the reinsertion of demobilised ex-combatants only started in June 2012. Indeed this was one of the reasons that the SELEKA coalition of rebel groups advanced to justify their resumption of hostilities in December 2012.

SSR and DDR are intimately linked (World Bank;2003); neither can be undertaken separately. In the Central African Republic, SSR and DDR processes have been approached independently, largely because the major development partners were reluctant to fund SSR. This disarticulation of these two interlinked processes has been proposed as the main reason for the weak impact of previous DDR processes in CAR (N'diaye, Caty et al, Lombard, Bagayoko). Nevertheless solace can be taken from the fact that the demobilised ex-combatants of the last DDR refused to participate in the SELEKA violence, preferring to concentrate on the reinsertion projects that were supported by the current DDR. It is therefore important to take into account the SSR and DDR dynamics if we are to propose a durable reintegration strategy. And one way of doing this is to reflect on lessons learnt from previous DDR/SSR processes.

### **4.1 Lessons Learnt from previous DDR processes**

From documents of previous DDR processes, and from interviews with various stakeholders who participated/or are knowledgeable of previous DDRs, we observed a repetition of similar mistakes. Mistakes that had serious implications on the sustainability of what the DDR was meant to achieve. A reflection on previous experiences on DDR brings out the following key lessons.

#### **4.1.1 One can not undertake DDR without an accompanying SSR**

The first attempt to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate combatants took place in 2002. It was undertaken by the National Programme for Disarmament and Reintegration (NPDR) with an objective of recovering 10,000 small and light weapons (SALW). Only a tenth, 1,100 guns were collected. As a way of explaining this failure, Berman says;

*The evolution of the security and political situation in Central Africa complicated the implementation of the programme. The failed coup d'état of October 2002 and the instability that resulted thereof, and finally the coup d'état of March 2003 further complicated issues. In spite of, or perhaps because of these challenges, the NPDR received the entire budget allocated.*

(Berman 2009; 28)

The second attempt at DDR did not fare any better<sup>1</sup>. PRAC as its acronym suggests was an utter failure. The same reason of ignoring the link between DDR and SSR and trying to disarm combatants in a situation of insecurity is given.

What is particularly worrisome was the fact that often weapons were not destroyed as required by conventions on disarmament.. *“of all the explanations that were given on the alleged divergence between arms collected and those that were destroyed, the most plausible is that the government of CAR kept for itself arms and munitions that were in good conditions”* (Berman 2009; 28) Berman's assertion points a finger at the weak system of arms management and disposal in the Central African Republic, a key aspect of SSR.

#### **4.1.2 Inadequate budgets & corruption hinders DDR/SSR**

In addition to delays in disbursement of funds, the budget that was allocated for the DDR process in CAR was insufficient given the magnitude of the DDR problem (Coty et al 2012). It is arguable that this was a result of previous experiences by donors, often linked to lack of financial transparency by state institutions in charge of DDR. It is alleged that 5 billion CFA (equal to 10 million dollars) that was given by the CEAC countries to the government of CAR to finance DDR was swindled by the president's entourage<sup>2</sup>. These funds were supposed to be remitted to BONUCA the main administrators of DDR but were instead used to repay the funeral costs of the president's mother. The rushed nature of most DDR

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<sup>1</sup> Only 190 combatants rendered in their guns out of 7,556 that were demobilized. The insecurity that the country was experiencing made combatants reticent to give up their only means of self-defense (MDRP 2008)

<sup>2</sup> <http://centrafrique-presse.over-blog.com/article-34092415.html>

processes (the argument being that no time should be wasted to separate men from arms as a matter of urgency) and the lack of oversight present weaknesses that encourage corruption. Thus in CAR, lack of financial probity was not limited to local actors, but also to UNDP, who were the main implementers of the programme (Scanteam report 2010)

#### **4.1.3 Communication, planning & implementation are critical for DDR**

The final evaluation report of the World Bank supported PRAC programme noted serious communication problems that impacted the DDR processes. Beneficiaries were not aware of the support that was being offered. Implementers of the programme did not communicate regularly with other stakeholders. This led to a situation of speculation and lack of confidence in the whole process that culminated in ex-combatants rioting at the offices of the UN, and their subsequent dispersion using teargas and water cannons.

#### **4.1.4 Delays in implementation of DDR have security implications**

The Brazzaville Comprehensive Peace Agreement that forms the framework for peace processes in the Central African Republic was signed in 2009. Ex-combatants were demobilised in 2010. It was two years later in 2012 that they started receiving reinsertion benefits. The period in between, remains a black box. It is no surprise then, that by the end of 2012, the rebellion had restarted which culminated in the capture of power in March 2013. Delaying DDR process is a risk to peace processes. It leads to precipitated implementation which offers opportunities for corruption. It can lead to resumption of hostilities as ex-combatants tire of lounging around with no activities.

## **4.2 Current Situation in the Central African Republic;**

On March, 24<sup>th</sup> 2013 a coalition of rebel groups under the umbrella name SELEKA took power after a rapid and largely unhindered attack on Bangui. The victory over the National Army (FACA) was the easy part. Two months after takeover looting and arbitrary killings were still continuing as the factionalism in the SELEKA came to the fore. The security situation late in August 2013 continues to be precarious. An intervention force mandated by the African Union (MISCA) has taken over from a previous one FOMAC (Multinational Force for Central Africa), sanctioned by the organisation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECAS). Whereas a National Government of Unity has been put in place (CNT) the humanitarian situation remains precarious. The current government by late 2013 had failed to restore order and peace. The SELEKA disintegrated into the factions that formed it, once they had captured power. The CNT's response of 'dissolving' the SELEKA in

the absence of a National Army has led to further chaos, arbitrary killings and general lawlessness. In December 2013 two-day fighting in Bangui left 1000 people dead. An Anti-SELEKA ragtag militia has formed (Anti-BALAKA or Anti-Machete) taking revenge on Muslims. The conflict threatens to take on a religious tone, which would be very difficult to resolve.

Former colonial powers, French have intervened, the African Union likewise. But even in the international intervention processes there appears to be no consensus on the way forward.

#### 4.2.1 Urgent challenges:

Despite the urgent humanitarian and security needs in CAR, response has been lukewarm. International Aid is at a trickle (the two major donors; the EU (8 million Euros) and France 6 million Euros) only confirm what the UN Humanitarian Secretary observed; that the CAR conflict is a forgotten crisis. This situation is further cofounded by lack of international media interest, hogged by other globally relevant crises; Syria, Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

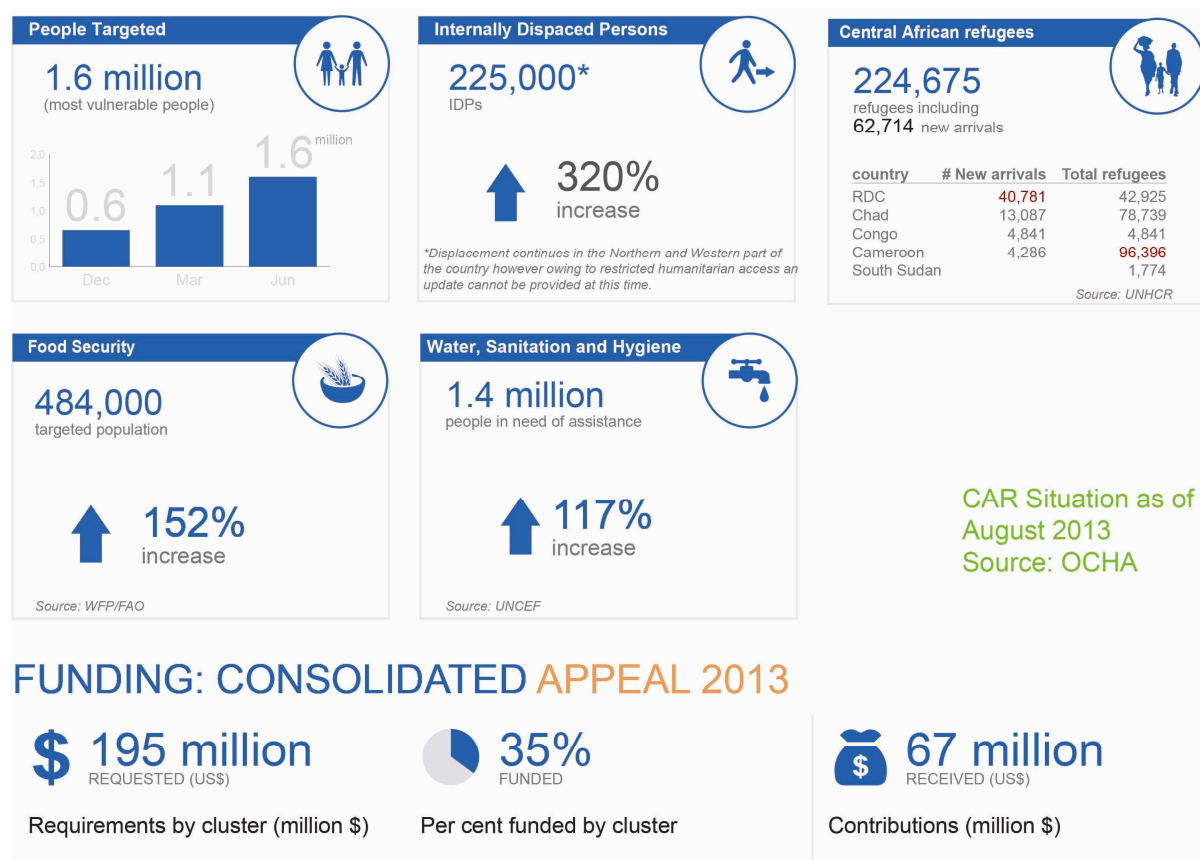


Figure 2 : Humanitarian Situation in CAR August 2013

The tattered economy of CAR has to be resuscitated. The re-establishment of social services ravaged by the crisis is urgent; schools outside of Bangui have been closed because of the

security situation since December 2012. Hospitals infrastructure and drugs were looted and destroyed. The country is in dire need of food support, as the conflict interfered with the agricultural cycle. Public civil service employees have not been paid for months on end, but more worrying, soldiers and SELEKA have not been paid either, relying on looting and terrorising the population to survive. The urgency of the security situation cannot be over emphasized. Former armed groups not linked to the SELEKA are threatening to take up again in response to exactions by SELEKA.

#### **4.2.2 Window of opportunity**

The above highlighted challenges notwithstanding, the taking of power by SELEKA offers a window of opportunity in the search for lasting peace.

For a long-time the nature of conflict in CAR was characterised by disparate armed groups with motivations as diverse as there were armed groups. Reasons for rebellion ranged from absence of the state and extreme marginalisation of certain regions by govCAR. This led to rebellion as a way of defending their communities against punitive government missions. This was further worsened by extreme poverty, spillover conflict from neighbouring Chad, Sudan and DRC, poaching and banditry as a means of survival. No region of the Central African Republic epitomises this chaotic state as the North & South East; the prefectures of Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga, Upper Koto and Upper Mbomou. A veritable Wild West minus the romanticism!

## 6.0 Conceptual Aspects of Reintegration

To strategically plan for a sustainable reintegration, it is important to reflect on ideas and meaning of true reintegration of ex-combatants; a reintegration that would lead to a sustainable, equitable and inclusive development-oriented society. The importance of thinking about the deep meaning of reintegration in a post-conflict society is emphasized by several authors: (Kaplan, O; 2012), (Bowd, R; 2013), (Özdem, Alpaslan 2012 ; 12). Özdem particularly laments the penury of literature on the reintegration aspects of ex-combatants.

Social reintegration of ex-combatants is the most important aspect of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, but there is little literature providing a clear understanding of its challenges and what reintegration truly is, and, more importantly, how it could be planned and implemented in post-conflict peace-building environments.

Özdem, Alpaslan 2012; 12

According to Özdem, a nuanced understanding of reintegration of ex-combatants will develop contextual indicators. To do this, he proposes a participatory research process.

Discourse on social integration demonstrates that a lack of positive social interaction of demobilised ex-combatants and communities into which they are reintegrated, and community acceptance have serious consequences for the individual and the family. Studies have shown the positive impact of interaction of isolated groups in society. Promoting the actualisation of social roles helps people build self-esteem and a sense of commitment to the community to which they belong.

DDR in CAR has been rather limited to aspects of disarmament, demobilization and short-term reinsertion mainly stressing economic aspects. This is not surprising; several authors have noted a low commitment of international actors and the Government of CAR for long-term reintegration, but one to which is nevertheless, granted the lowest priority' (Nzekani, P, 2013, Sany 2009).

Yet as Anders Nilsson (2005:2) observes, "reintegration should be seen as a societal process of economic assimilation, political and social ex-combatants and their families in civil society". First, reintegration has not only economic and social dimensions, it also has political demands. From this point of view, sustainable reintegration should not be equated only with

planned programs and funded by donors. It is rather a broad societal process involving many stakeholders, especially local actors.

Nilsson (2005;8) stresses that ex-combatants, their families and local communities are the ones who do most of the work of reintegration. “If donors do not take them into consideration in their planning and implementation the result will be external programs don't support local reintegration processes” and are consequently not sustainable.

For reintegration to be sustainable it is important then to rely on the actions of the ex-combatant in the community because “social action is never a selfish individual action; it takes shape and meaning in a network of relationships involving human and non-human components and is bounded by social conventions, value systems and relationships of power Long, Norman (2004). If such is the case, then all action should be aimed at strengthening reintegration of social capital, participation and inclusion, restoration of confidence, reconciliation and acceptance, as well as economic aspects to provide a means of survival for demobilized.

Central African Republic key actors in DDR do not appear to have a shared understanding of the purposes of reintegration. This has led, sometimes to unrealistic expectations and goals difficult to achieve by only DDR programmes. Additionally the challenge of unrealistic expectations was compounded by the large number of actors, operating under a small, understaffed coordination unit relying solely on NGOs which led to poor implementation. This is also observed by Lombard (2012) when she says:

When we look at different DDR programs in CAR during the last decade, it becomes clear that these programs have created an incitement to rebellion, and that the expectations and by DDR programs are never satisfied. That this situation does not lead to more violence and rebellion offers evidence of a widespread aversion to armed conflict in CAR

Lombard, L (2012, 375)

For this strategy we will use the definition of reintegration proposed by Julia Buxton, which in our view is both comprehensive and reflects the realities of CAR as well as the goal of the reintegration process.

Buxton says of reintegration;

Reintegration is multidimensional, a complex long-term process by which ex-combatants and their families are assisted to settle (and reintegrate) in post-war communities (the social aspect), to be part of the process decision-

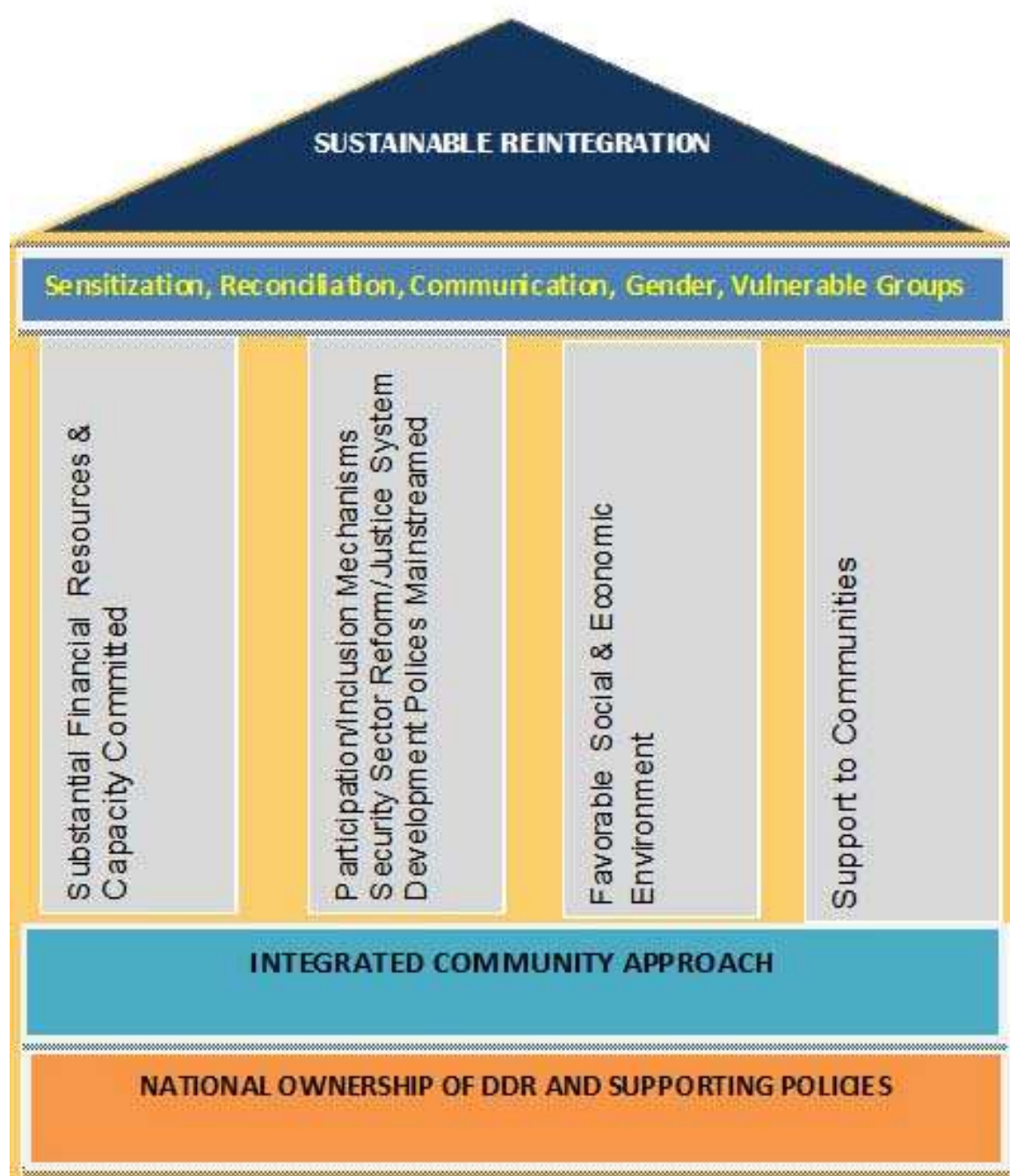


making (political element), and to engage in sustainable development through civilian employment and other livelihood opportunities (economics) as well as adapting themselves to the attitudes and expectations of their communities and dealing with their psychological trauma following the experiences of war (psychosocial aspects)

Buxton J, 2008:5

We also frame the strategy in the actor-centred approach proposed by Norman Long and repropoed by Anders Nilson which seeks to position reintegration into the social narrative; a reintegration embedded in the social nexus.

## 7.1 Framework for a Sustainable Reintegration



For reintegration to be truly sustainable in the Central African Republic, it should be founded on two basic pillars; national ownership of the process through policies supportive of reintegration and a comprehensive community based reintegration approach. This will require substantial resources; both financial and institutional capacity support. It will also require actors to truly and meaningfully facilitate and advocate for mechanisms of participation and inclusion in decision-making processes by the ex-combatants and the

community as well as other stakeholders. Additionally it is urgent that a favourable socioeconomic environment space and processes are provided.

Various processes to support the implementation of the sustainable reintegration strategy are should be planned for; awareness and advocacy for the reintegration process both to the communities and ex-combatants linked with the activities of peace and reconciliation. These supporting activities will require a robust, long-term communication and advocacy strategy, a stakeholder engagement strategy, and a commitment of all the stakeholders involved in the processes.

Sustainable reintegration will be based on an integrated community approach; not only on short-term infrastructural activities or ex-combatants economic reinsertion as has been previously the case, but also on a willingness to understand the community dynamics and ex-combatants as a way of anchoring reintegration activities into the social fabric and networks. The strategy proposes that host communities are supported to receive demobilised ex-combatants, mechanisms put in place to continually monitor the socio-economic and political environment for risks and opportunities, and to think of activities that can bring together both groups to facilitate the renewal of the social fabric.

At the national level, the stakeholders will undertake a well thought out on what reintegration means, and avoid the practices of ad-hoc planning, as was the case in the past. It is important to have a shared common vision of the reintegration process, hence the importance of maintaining a constant dialogue with all the stakeholders. Current practice suggests that the priorities of the donors at the strategic and operational levels may be dissonant, leading to different outcomes from those envisaged. Implementers and beneficiaries often see DDR through differing lenses.

For the demobilized in CAR, DDR represents a 'right' to be paid for having stopped fighting. It is a 'social contract'; the combatant stops fighting and in exchange he is paid, or benefits from DDR. For the international community and the GovCAR, the implicit objective of DDR would be 'stabilize' the security situation by separating combatants from their guns so that only the state has a monopoly to national security. Such a narrow definition of the aims of DDR cannot ensure sustainable processes...especially so, if other key stakeholders are left out of the process.

## 8.0 Implementation Strategy

The implementation of the sustainable reintegration strategy will focus on providing a sustainable livelihood to ex-combatants and enhancing social mechanisms to help the reintegration process. This requires studying opportunities available in the communities of reintegration, and the power dynamics in the communities of reception.

In the Central African Republic 80% of the population depend on agriculture and livestock rearing. 72% of the demobilized ex-combatants earned their livelihoods in the agricultural sector before the conflict. Also there is a prevalence of illiteracy (80%) among demobilized ex-combatants questioned (cf. Atlas of Socio-Security profiles of ex-combatants in the Northwest Vol. 2). The background of the ex-combatants make it that agriculture is the sector that can anchor sustainable reintegration. It makes sense to target the activities of recovery and economic reintegration in the agricultural sector.

This can be done through:

- Strengthening the technical and financial capacity of community organizations, to enable them to intensify agricultural production of staple foods, vegetables and cash crops (cassava, millet, tomato, onion, cotton, etc.) animal husbandry, fish farming and crafts;
- Diversification of economic activities through the introduction of small-scale mechanisation and value addition through the processing of local products (cotton or food);
- Supporting start-ups of micro or small businesses through micro-finance, through the facilitation of the creation of structures for savings and credit;
- Promoting the commercialisation and marketing of local products.

Several challenges can be identified that are likely to affect the above suggestions.

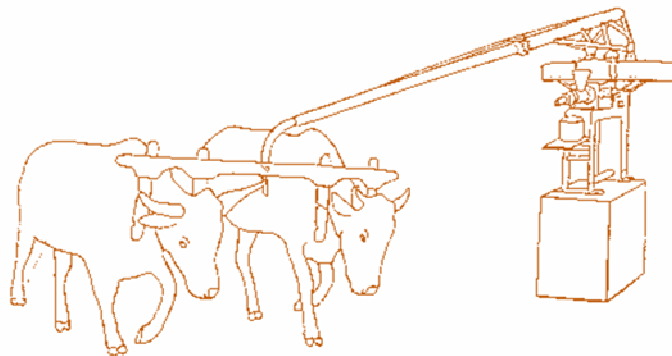
### **Micro-Credit:**

While there is a high demand for microcredit services (60% of the population would love to benefit from a loan) according to a study made by UNDP and FENI, the penetration rate of

micro-credit services was a paltry 1.22% in the whole country. Further still most of the service providers are concentrated in Bangui at the expense of rural areas.

The microfinance sector shows “a lack of professionalism, low development of new products, difficulties in the repayment of loans and problems related to the implementation of microfinance in rural areas due to insecurity and the viability of the Micro-finance Institutions” (Malo, d.& Koyadondri, L. 2006)

The limited capacity to mobilise resources through microfinance is not the only problem. The National economy has deteriorated as a result of conflict, and is mostly informal (Lamb et al 2006). Lack of infrastructure (bad roads, intermittent electricity supply, and lack of markets) and long distances involved to reach the nearest markets stifle efforts to commercialise and mechanise agricultural products.



**Figure 3 Animal Traction in food processing**

Ex-combatants should be encouraged to form small groups and undertake small micro-projects with a view of;

- Intensifying mechanization of agricultural production through animal traction which has been very successful elsewhere in West-Africa and value addition in primary processing of products.
- Intensification of livestock and animal husbandry activities especially projects supporting breeding of goats, pigs and cows.
- Promotion of small business also presents opportunities for sustainable reintegration namely; kiosks shops, village pharmacies, artisanal welding, transportation of merchandise as well as small crafts projects determined in accordance with the needs of the communities.



Figure 4 Transporting goods and people in CAR

### **Social Reintegration:**

Most of the interventions of the (R) part of DDR focus on economic reintegration. Programmes seek to provide livelihoods to the ex-combatants sometimes at the expense of the communities receiving them who view this as rewarding participation in conflict. Laudable as this may be, it often creates friction between the two groups, especially if the ex-combatants were responsible for atrocities against the communities. The aim of reintegration should not be to create differences in groups but to bring them together in a shared lifestyle.

At the individual level of the ex-combatant, the factors that determine social reintegration are; the experiences suffered in the conflict, the links with the community that the demobilized had before the conflict and the post-conflict socio-economic and security situation. Social reintegration at the community level is determined by the acceptance of the ex-combatant by the host community (which depends on ex-combatants' behaviour during the conflict, and the success of the reconciliation process), by social networks that the demobilized has, but also his willingness to sever ties with his former 'family of war'.

Relationships between ex-combatants and the members of the host community are the nucleus of social reintegration. These relationships are facilitated by the participation of demobilized ex-combatants in everyday life, in community processes. It is through the participation and community action that social capital, a key component of reintegration, is built. Therefore, it is imperative to anchor reintegration in the social dynamics, to make it sustainable.

Social reintegration could, in the first place be undertaken through the participation of host communities and ex-combatants in selected activities (why not, for example, make micro-projects involving ex-combatants and other members of the community?). In order to identify

opportunities for social reintegration community (Community Based Reintegration) there is need for a study focused on social dynamics in host communities.

## **9.0 Special Focus on Special Groups and Areas:**

Previous DDR processes in CAR were mechanical processes that had a ‘cut and paste’ feel to them. They were not anchored on the needs of the ex-combatants nor were they sensitive to the different realities on the ground.

### **9.1 The North East; A troubled Region**

Sparsely populated (0.51 to 1.74 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>), the Northeast is made up of Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures. Historically the Northeast region has for a long time been marginalized. Cradle of conflict in recent years, it hardly experienced any control by the Government. The Northeast region is characterized by poverty more acute than the rest of the country. The region is plagued by various conflicts often with foreign origins; Sudanese poachers, Zaraguinas, Transhumant pastoralists, armed Chadian groups, Armed Bamboo and Gum Arabica thieves etc (cf; Atlas of the Socio-security profile of Northwest Vol.2). The Northeast posed risks of “*a confrontational polarization based on community memberships around ethnic communities: Kara, Goula and Rounga*” (OECD report 2009:11). It is not surprising therefore that four of the five groups who make up the SELEKA are from the North East. The way DDR is undertaken for the North East will be a litmus test of political will to end the conflict in the CAR region.

### **9.2 Special Vulnerable Groups**

Conflicts in Africa have demonstrated that war does not affect all members of society in the same way. In Central Africa, the groups who are most vulnerable to conflict and post conflict and most likely to have problems of reintegration are women ex-combatants, child soldiers and disabled ex-combatants. The current goal of DDR is security first; How to get weapons from potentially dangerous people. It is therefore not surprising that child ex-combatants, women and girls affected by the fighting and disabled ex-combatants have hardly received any attention and support that they deserve from the DDR process.

Yet how a country treats its weakest citizens has far-reaching consequences on the confidence that citizens have in the State. The protection of children in conflict situations and the imperative to support women ex-combatants are principles recognized by international law. Unfortunately in CAR vulnerable groups do not receive any assistance as opposed to male ex-combatants. They do not even appear in the documentation on programme interventions.

### 9.2.1 Child Soldiers:

According to UNICEF, approximately 3500 children soldiers are active in armed groups, including self-defence groups, in the Central African Republic. The processes of demobilization and reintegration of child combatants are conducted by UNICEF and international NGOs but on a very small scale. The reintegration of child ex-combatants must be considered as an emergency and undertaken in a comprehensive way with national DDR processes. Customized projects for support of child ex-combatants can be designed with the support of UNICEF. The risk that child ex-combatants will fall under the radar of National DDR processes is considerable if they are not integrated into the database and followed closely by National Coordination. Current DDR practices do not respond to long-term



reintegration needs of child ex-combatants.

Yet the reintegration of child ex-combatants is extremely difficult. According to Verhey (2002) child soldiers often have very inflated expectations, have exaggerated pride of their military identity and have come to rely on aggression to meet their needs and solve problems.

The lack of acculturation in a family environment means that child soldiers do not have the same moral and social values as the community. It would require more than five years of continued support for child ex-combatants to reintegrate.



### 9.2.2 Women ex-combatants and girls affected by conflict

Perhaps no group in society is more affected by conflict than women. Women are particularly affected by the effects of the conflict both in the short and long term. Aggression and sexual exploitation are frequently used as weapons during conflict. The victimization of women in the conflict leads to isolation, alienation, leading to a prolonged emotional trauma; unwanted pregnancies often lead to abandoned children and life-long social stigma.

The importance of targeting women ex-combatants in the DDR process is advocated through United Nation Security Council Resolution <sup>3</sup>1325. In the Central African Republic, the problem of women ex-combatants in DDR lies in the difficulty of determining the criteria for their selection. The previous DDR focussed on collection of weapons. Yet women who participated in conflicts often had other responsibilities other than carrying guns. Since they could not submit weapons they were excluded from the process. The lack of expertise in gender issues in DDR meant that women associated with the conflicts were often neglected by the DDR process. Although recognized in the documentation on DDR in CAR, Gender issues hardly feature in implementation of DDR. When women do get involved, it is a kind of tokenism to the gender agenda; membership on minority committees etc. There appears to be no project related to the gender-specific needs.



Figure 5 Women in Armed Groups in CAR

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<sup>3</sup>Resolution 1325 the Security Council adopted in October 2000 supports the principle of the full participation of women, on the same footing as men in all stages of the peace process, from prevention to the consolidation of peace through peace-keeping.

### 9.2.3 Disabled ex-combatants

The disabled ex-combatants in developing countries are among the most vulnerable of the poor. In the Central African Republic there is lack of information on their number and how they live. Yet there are reasons to suppose that their numbers would have increased due to conflicts. Disabled people in general are often seen as objects of charity; underestimated, overprotected, they frequently suffer stigma. The demobilized persons with disabilities deserve particular attention because they have special needs which are hard to satisfy, especially in an environment such as exists in CAR: medical care, medical rehabilitation, access to disability equipment like prostheses, wheelchairs and centres of vocational training that are tailored to their specific needs.

To determine those needs, it would be useful to programme the disability component early enough during the demobilization phase to take account of disability and to capture their socio-economic situation.

Disabled ex-combatants would benefit during the demobilisation phase from specialist doctors to diagnose their disabilities and perform a proper categorization of their disability for subsequent focused interventions.

Unfortunately the disability component is absent from the literature and the facts of the DDR process in CAR. It can be argued that this is due to the narrow focus of DDR as principally a mechanism for collection of arms. Yet in other countries experience has shown that the demobilized persons with disabilities can contribute to peace and development through socio-economic activities.





## **Conclusions:**

The Central African Republic has experienced conflict for the last 40 years. The conflict stems from a shambolic post-independence governance, lack of a 'social contract' between the state and its citizens, lack of legitimacy of governments, lack of strong institutions and infrastructures, absence of the state from the hinterland, and continued foreign interventions.

Previous DDR experiences were found wanting, mainly because they did not take into account the political, social and institutional realities on the ground. DDR came to be seen not as a way of ensuring peace and security but as a reward for dissidence on the part of ex-combatants and as a way of getting rich by personnel through corruption, while the state used as a stick and carrot to keep in power.

The most recent wave of violence by SELEKA has had serious humanitarian impacts; internally displaced, refugees, destruction of infrastructures and loss of human lives.

Yet it offers an opportunity to build a lasting peace; the main protagonists who make up the SELEKA come from the region that has been the cradle of conflict in CAR and Chad as well as South Sudan. The fact that they are now in leadership would offer a credible process of DDR. This time, a sustainable strategy would go a long way in solving some of the SSR challenges if it is done correctly.

We hereby propose a sustainable reintegration strategy based on our experience from the field and from information gathered from documents. We remain aware that there is still a need for further in-depth studies that reflect the dynamics of the current situation in CAR. A sustainable reintegration strategy builds on a coherent design focused on results. It is also based on reliable knowledge that reflects the actuality of the country. The collection of reliable baseline information is therefore fundamental. In CAR this information is largely missing.

As the country becomes more stable and the structures and institutions of Government operational, the roles and responsibilities for sustainable reintegration should be devolved to local institutions. This will form the backbone of the exit strategy for sustainable reintegration. In the meantime, BINUCA/SIU remains the most favourable location to

conduct reintegration activities. The location of the national coordination in BINUCA/SIU exploits the synergies offered by the United Nations country team, but also maintains a link with the SSR which is fundamental for a successful DDR.

## Annexes

### Chronology of events in the Central African Republic since Independence

August 13, 1960 Proclamation of Independence .

November 17, 1960 David Dacko elected president by the National Assembly .

November 1962 The Movement for the social development of Black Africa proclaimed single party.

January 5, 1964 Re-election of David Dacko .

December 31, 1965 coup by Colonel Jean- Bedel Bokassa .

April 11 1969 Attempted coup by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Banza .

March 2, 1972 Jean- Bedel Bokassa is made president for life.

May 10, 1974 Nationalization of companies.

May 20 1974 Jean - Bedel Bokassa was promoted Marshal .

November 1974 Attempted coup of General Lingoupou .

February 3, 1976 Assassination Attempt against Marshal Bokassa .

December 4, 1976 Proclamation of the Central African Empire during the extraordinary congress of Mesan .

December 4, 1977 Coronation of Emperor Bokassa I and Queen Catherine

18-19 January 1979 bloody repression of demonstrations in schools (400 students killed ) .

20-21 September 1979, France organizes Operation Barracuda. Emperor Bokassa overthrown.  
former president David Dacko is restored

December 24, 1980 Jean- Bedel Bokassa sentenced to death in absentia.

March 15, 1981 David Dacko wins presidential election.

September 1, 1981 General André Kolingba forces President David Dacko to resign.

Establishes a Military Committee for National Recovery ( CMRN ) . Political parties are banned.

3 March 1982 Attempted coup by Ange -Félix Patassé.

November 21, 1986 Adoption by referendum of the new Constitution.

November 29, 1986 Victory of General André Kolingba in the presidential election .

February 6-7, 1987 Creation of a party, the Central African Democratic Rally (RDC) .

September 19, 1993 Patassé wins presidential election.

12 January 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc.

April-May 1996 Mutinies in the army due to non-payment of salary arrears. French military intervention in support of President Ange -Félix Patassé. A series of strikes paralyzed the country.

February 12, 1997 An inter-African force , the Mission of intervention and monitoring of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB ) replaces the French military intervention.

April 1998 MISAB is replaced by the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic MINURCA

September 19, 1999 Re-election of Ange- Félix Patassé.

February 2000 End Operations Minurca .

May 28, 2001 Attempted coup André Kolingba .

15 March 2003 coup of General François Bozizé himself president of the Republic.

December 5, 2004 Adoption by referendum of a new constitution.

May 8, 2005 Victory General François Bozizé in the presidential election .

August 2005 Flood of the capital Bangui ( 22,500 homeless ) .

October 30, 2006 takeover of Birao , north- east of the country , by UFDR rebels .

November 30, 2006 bombing by the French army of two towns in the north of the country

May 9, 2008 in Bangui Signature of a peace agreement between CAR Government, APRD and UFDR .

September 29, 2008 Amnesty against crimes committed since 1999.

June 2009 Flooding of the capital Bangui ( 11,000 homeless ) .

January 23, 2011 Re-election of François Bozizé.

December 12, 2012 SELEKA a rebel coalition of Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR ), the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace ( CPJC ) and CPSK Wakodro is formed.

December 17, 2012 The rebels took control of Seleka cities Bamingui , Ndélé, Mbres

December 18, 2012 Seleka the rebels took control of the mining town of Bria .

December 19, 2012 The rebels took control of Seleka Kabo .

January 11, 2013 signed in Libreville-Gabon, a peace agreement for a cease -fire between the government and Seleka and the formation of a national unity government.

March 24, 2013 entry of rebels Seleka in Bangui.

[http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Chronologie-pays\\_77\\_centrafrique](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Chronologie-pays_77_centrafrique) (accessed 03/Avril/2013 )

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