

**Progress Report  
Learning for Equality, Access and Peace (LEAP) Program**

**August 2007-February 2009**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In August 2007, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) Secretariat launched the **Learning for Equality, Access and Peace (LEAP)** Program, which is aimed at strengthening the impact of MDRP-financed programs from a gender perspective. LEAP is envisioned as a flexible program, which can address gender issues in Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) activities regardless of the stage they are at or the degree to which gender has been previously considered.

Specific activities of the LEAP program include:

- Technical assistance to ongoing programs to improve programmatic responses of ongoing MDRP projects, at identification, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration levels;
- Pilots to explore innovative ways to strengthening D&R and gender approaches; and
- Generation of empirical data and subsequent development of strategic guidance and operational best practices with a view to building on the currently limited and one-dimensional ‘Gender & D&R’ knowledge base.

**2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ONGOING MDRP PROJECTS**

**2.1. Angola**

Support to the *Angola Emergency and Demobilization Project* (closed on December 31, 2008) has focused on the vulnerable groups component which provides social and economic reintegration to vulnerable ex-combatants and other vulnerable community members (women, children and disabled) through: vocational training, promotion of income generating activities, physical rehabilitation, and social reintegration support. With technical assistance (TA) from LEAP, the following activities were identified:

- (a) Capacity building of implementation partners to provide gender training as well as address gender issues in their programs;
- (b) Development of lessons for social and economic reintegration from sub-projects addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including other members of the community; and
- (c) Operational tools to strengthen economic reintegration of former combatants in urban areas for future D&R projects (see further details under 4.1.).

Status:

- Gender focal point and project staff received training on gender through TA from LEAP staff;
- Local consultant implemented training of basic gender concepts as well as developed operational tools for implementation partners of the sub-projects and project staff at the provincial levels. The objective of the training was to improve gender sensitization provided by implementation partners to project beneficiaries, and improve their capacity to address gender differentiated needs; and
- Research implemented to develop operational tools in order to strengthen economic reintegration of former combatants in urban areas for future D&R projects (see further details under 4.1.).

## **2.2. Burundi**

With TA from LEAP, a detailed action plan to mainstream gender was developed by the *Emergency Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration Project* (closed on December 31, 2008). The main activities of the action plan included:

*Institutional level:* (a) development of a gender strategy for the overall project, (b) training on gender for project staff at the national and regional level, and (c) training of implementation partners on gender aspects of social and economic reintegration.

*Demobilization:* (a) gender differentiated needs addressed in demobilization camps, and (b) equal access for male and female combatants, and girls and boys child soldiers of the FNL, facilitated in some cases by local partners such as UNIFEM, BINUB and ACORD.

*Reintegration:* (a) gender sensitization activities in responsibilities of implementation partners, (b) partners of ex-combatants included in economic reintegration activities, (c) gender mainstreaming of child soldiers activities, (d) program benefits to widows of ex-combatants, (e) potential pilot on masculinity to decrease domestic violence among partners and strengthen collaborative decision making processes among partners, (f) strengthen social reintegration from a gender point including providing technical assistance to associations (of ex-combatants as well as mixed associations), and sensitization of families and communities of returning ex-combatants, and (g) registration of illegitimate children of female project beneficiaries.

The following gender related actions were undertaken during the last phase of the project:

- Gender focal point received training on gender through TA from LEAP staff as well as participated in international workshop on gender and D&R. Gender focal point liaised with other relevant institutions working on gender and D&R, such as UNIFEM and BINUB;

- A gender strategy for the project was developed by the gender focal point and approved by the project;
- Gender sensitization and training provided to project staff at the provincial level as well as to implementation partners to strengthen gender mainstreaming in social and economic reintegration activities. Gender activities were included in all new contracts with implementation partners for economic reintegration activities;
- Technical assistance provided to strengthen and promote associations of female former combatants, as well as mixed associations (female ex-combatants and other community members) to strengthen their economic activities, including exchanges of experiences among associations; and
- The gender focal point provided continuous assistance to female beneficiaries upon their request.

The Government of Burundi and the World Bank are currently preparing a new *Demobilization and Transitional Reintegration Project*. LEAP provided support to mainstream gender in the new program. The project includes a separate component to provide specialized socio-economic reintegration and medical support to vulnerable groups, including children associated with the armed forces, women and the disabled. Additionally, the project design takes into account lessons learnt from the previous project as well as in other D&R projects in the region, including inclusion of spouse and family participation at some stages of the D&R process, and adapted assistance for children associated with the armed forces who are adolescents. The new project will build upon the gender action plan and strategy developed under the previous project.

### **2.3. Republic of Congo**

With TA from LEAP, a detailed action plan to mainstream gender was developed by the *Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project*. Progress includes:

- Gender focal point, project staff as well as facilitator between Government and Pasteur Ntumi trained on gender and D&R;
- A gender strategy developed and adapted by the project;
- 12 focal points in Pool region trained on gender; and
- Sensitization on Gender Based Violence (GBV), HIV/AIDS and drug abuse implemented at the provincial level.

### **2.4. Democratic Republic of Congo**

With TA from LEAP, including support from local LEAP staff, as well as inputs from other local key partners (including UNIFEM, MONUC, CIDA, Caritas, EU, GTZ, UNFPA, UNICEF) the following key gender constraints have been identified:

- Difficulties identifying female child soldiers and combatants due to, among others, social constraints (stigmatization), dependency on commanders for identification, lack of sensitization on an inclusive approach to D&R, security concerns for females during identification phase, unclear definition of female

combatants, limited access to information of the project for potential female beneficiaries, and misinformation. To increase access to the project for females, approaches need to be differentiated according to different recruitment patterns of irregular armed forces;

- Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFF) (especially from irregular armed forces) do not have access to project benefits; limited support from other programs available;
- As with WAFF, very limited humanitarian support is available to dependants of former combatants, such as those surrounding the ‘*brassage*’ process. Families of ex-combatants often stay behind once they leave the orientation centers;
- High levels of GBV with perpetrators including irregular and regular armed forces, occasionally MONUC forces, and civilian populations; and
- Child mothers are especially vulnerable and face additional socioeconomic reintegration challenges.

To address the identified gender constraints, the *Emergency Reintegration and Demobilization Project Additional Financing* (effective September 2008) includes a special focus on the social and economic reintegration of female ex-combatants by: ensuring that their special needs are taken into consideration; equal benefits are granted; and strengthening gender awareness and monitoring the impact of the Program. The project foresees specific resources (US\$ 1 million) to implement these activities. With TA support from LEAP, a gender action plan was developed to ensure gender sensitive programming at all levels of the project. In addition, LEAP is providing support to the project to replicate nationwide the pilot in Kindu, Maniema to strengthen socio-economic reintegration opportunities for vulnerable single headed households of ex-combatants (discussed in detail under 3. DRC pilot project). LEAP coordinates closely with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to ensure complementarities of the specific gender activities foreseen in the Socio-Economic Integration Support Project (PARSEC), which co-finances D&R activities in DRC.

In response to the issue of GBV, LEAP provided TA to (a) increase knowledge on operational best practices of GBV programs, (b) increase linkages between D&R and GBV programs, and (c) provide TA to develop GBV program in Eastern DRC (see 4.4. Gender Based Violence for a detailed description).

## **2.5. Rwanda**

The *Second Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Project* (closed on December 31, 2008) provided support to female former combatants by providing separate facilities for demobilization, equal opportunities for reintegration and positive discrimination for female former combatants who apply for the Vulnerable Support Window (VSW) assistance. In addition, partners of ex-combatants are involved in the decision making process of the type of Income Generating Activities chosen to be supported under the VSW, as well as to include them in the training of business development. Given that the

project has already paid significant attention to gender, LEAP support to the project focused on:

- Implementation of a gender training workshop including project staff at the national and regional level;
- Implementation of a workshop involving former female combatants, local leaders and other community based actors with a stake in gender issues to improve understanding of specific constraints of former female combatants;
- Reaching out to female combatants in Eastern DRC through communications tools;
- Rapid assessment of operational lessons from the project such as additional vulnerable supports window for which female ex-combatants automatically qualify and inclusion of partners in decision making processes for micro-projects (forthcoming); and
- Retrospective assessment of gender including lessons from community assessment and yearly project evaluations which will feed into future operations in Rwanda and elsewhere (forthcoming).

With TA from LEAP, a small project has been developed to provide assistance to the Ndabaga Association, a national association of female ex-combatants, to develop sustainable economic livelihood opportunities. Specific objectives are to deepen and expand the market share of the Ndabaga Association in milk distribution and become the stepping stone for being the leading distributor of Nyabisindu dairy products in Rwanda (funding for activities itself secured from other World Bank TF).

The Government of Rwanda and the World Bank are currently preparing the *Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program, Stage III*. LEAP provided support to mainstream gender in the new program. The program includes, among others:

- Special treatment during the screening process and the pre-discharge process for female and child ex-combatants;
- Addressing GBV during the Pre-Discharge Orientation through training, counseling and referral when necessary;
- Inclusion of a chapter addressing specific training on trauma related to GBV in the psychosocial training manual; and
- Targeted support for social and economic reintegration of female project beneficiaries, including the following specific measures: (a) ensuring they access and receive equal benefits with their male counterparts; (b) ensuring that all implementing partners in communities get adequate sensitisation on gender issues; (c) ensuring that all female ex-combatants can access VSW grants to enhance their reintegration; and (d) sensitisation on GBV and the role played by men in the fight against GBV.

## **2.6. Uganda**

The Uganda *Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project* (effective 08/2008) identifies among others the following areas related to gender: (a) ensuring demobilization

planning processes and facilities are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and children; (b) providing gender-sensitive reinsertion packages, with appropriate distribution processes; and (c) linking up individual reporters to opportunities and support programs, particularly for vulnerable reporters who may lack access due to mobility, social, gender and age limitations.

Based upon an assessment by LEAP and the World Bank Task Team, the following activities were agreed upon with the Amnesty Commission to ensure mainstreaming at the implementation level:

- Develop a Gender Action Plan which would cover all the different components of the project, as well as technical guidelines on gender;
- Organize training on implementation of gender sensitive responses for demobilization and repatriation, reinsertion, support for socio-economic reintegration, and in dialogue and reconciliation promotion. The training would include the AC staff at all levels, implementation partners, as well as Community Focal Points;
- Review upon availability of the full report on the capacity and status of the reception centers in Northern and Eastern Uganda if the reception centers have the capacity to provide gender and age appropriate services (such as provision of safety, appropriate health care, and child care);
- Ensure that the Information, Counseling and Referral Services (ICRS) system is gender sensitive and includes services to address specific needs and constraints of vulnerable reporters, such as females, children and male youth;
- Ensure gender sensitive reinsertion packages; and
- Include females as Community Focal Points and explore potential collaboration and/or overlap with child protection volunteers.

With support from LEAP, draft Technical Guidelines to Mainstream Gender (TGMG) in the project have been developed and discussed at a gender training inception workshop with the Amnesty Commission. The draft TGMG will be discussed in 4-6 regional workshops which will take place in March and April 2009. Additionally, an impact evaluation of the implementation of the gender mainstreaming training for the Amnesty Commission staff, implementation partners and community focal points will be implemented (March-May 2009).

### **3. DRC PILOT PROJECT**

The overall objective of the pilot is to strengthen socio-economic reintegration opportunities for vulnerable single headed households of ex-combatants demobilized through the *Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project*. The target groups are single head of households of former combatants (especially females) and mother ex-child soldiers. The project also includes a separate in-depth impact evaluation to extract lessons for future D&R projects.

#### Rationale and background

Discussions with the Government, implementation partners, and focus groups with female ex-combatants in Kindu, Maniema, confirmed that single female ex-combatants with children and child mothers face additional constraints to social and economic reintegration, including providing basic health and education needs to their children.

Female ex-combatants face higher barriers to socio-economic reintegration stemming from a series of complex socio-economic and cultural factors including: an overall cultural perception of lower social status (applicable to all females) and social stigmatization of ex-combatants. Specific prejudices associated with young women and girl child soldiers include: assumptions that they have been sexually abused and hence have lost their 'purity', fear that they will return infected with sexually-transmitted diseases, fear that the military commander or 'husband' will pursue the girl and threaten her family, neighbors and community, and a presumption that they will incite bad or 'promiscuous behavior' in other girls. Host communities are sometimes fearful of the aggressive behavior presumed to be acquired through association with the armed forces and fear the ex-combatants would be out of sync with culturally accepted gender norms.

Therefore communities and families are often unable or unwilling to accept the return of young women and girls child soldiers, especially if they return with children. Reinforcing such perceptions are the women's own assumptions of how they will be perceived upon returning to their community. Aware of the stigma and barriers they may face, they might choose to marginalize themselves from the community. It is generally accepted that these specific prejudices result in the formation of a group of particularly vulnerable former combatants who are disproportionately affected by conventional barriers to socio-economic reintegration.

The pilot is founded on the premise that ultimately, vulnerable groups of ex-combatants face particular barriers to overall successful socio-economic reintegration at the social level due to their lower social capital and lack of social safety nets through family support. These female former combatants therefore find themselves in a situation whereby economic opportunities are limited due to a first layer of social barriers (as described above) and prospects for social reintegration are further eroded due to subsequent low economic productivity, presenting a second layer of barriers reinforcing the first.

An injection of skills and assets at the economic level has been shown to enhance the prospects for overcoming barriers to social reintegration, thus breaking the vicious circle that engages vulnerable former combatants in poverty. The MDRP experience, extensive stakeholder consultation and lessons from other countries confirm both the vulnerability of the target group and the feasibility of the planned approach to counter the effects of stigmatization.

Common emerging barriers for successful socio-economic reintegration identified by stakeholder consultation include: limited access to land, childcare, social capital, micro-

credit, and limited access to information on budget management, saving mechanisms and credit benefits. An additional constraint of the target group is a high level of illiteracy.

Specific activities of the pilot include: (a) support for income-generating activities, (b) basic skills and business management training, and (c) GBV information referral and sensitization.

The pilot project is implemented in Kindu, Maniema through Caritas, Congo (July 2008-April 2009). Progress of the pilot include

- Selection of beneficiaries including 140 female ex-combatants and 60 community members (27 women and 33 men), based upon vulnerability criteria including access to land, type of shelter, assets, number of dependents, and disability/chronic illness;
- Literacy and numeracy training for 104 beneficiaries - ongoing;
- Enterprises Management Training to build on beneficiaries' capacity to manage an Income Generating Activity (IGA) including budget management - ongoing;
- Regular technical assistance for IGA provided;
- Provision of child care for beneficiaries during training sessions;
- Provision of start-up inputs of production for US\$ 100/beneficiary - ongoing; and
- Sensitization of the communities against GBV through radio and sensitization events - implemented.

A baseline survey of female ex-combatants was carried out in May 2008 to analyze their vulnerability. The project includes an in-depth impact evaluation to assess improvement in economic and social reintegrating of female former combatants in their communities. A baseline survey of project beneficiaries was carried out in November-December 2008, which will be followed by an end-of project survey to assess project impacts.

#### **4. ENHANCING 'GENDER & D&R' KNOWLEDGE BASE**

##### ***4.1. Study: Out of Work, Out of Manhood: Structural Unemployment, Young Men, Masculinities and Conflict in Angola***

The main objectives of the study are: (a) to understand the constraints and coping mechanisms of young men (including ex-combatants) in urban areas in relation to work trajectories, social exclusion, and migration, and the implications of these for their interactions and relationships with women and children and for conflict and violence prevention; and (b) to provide recommendations and insights for future programs on young excluded urban men related to D&R, employment creation, conflict and violence prevention, youth development and education.

Status:

- Research proposal discussed in-country through workshop with representatives of IRSEM, NGOs and universities. The stakeholders' meeting determined the details of the field work, including: (1) defining the criteria for

choosing participants that will be interviewed (e.g.: men/ women, young men/ older man, married/ unmarried, employed/ unemployed, in school/ out of school, demobilized, urban/rural, etc.); (2) planning logistics of the field work (research sites, etc.); and (3) establishing research questions;

- Literature review on young men, masculinities, unemployment, conflict/post-conflict and violence in Sub-Saharan Africa and Angola carried out;
- Field work carried out in five municipalities in the provinces of Luanda and Huambo. Interviews and focus groups included young men (working and out-of-work), ex-combatants/demobilizing soldiers, young men who migrated as refugees or internally displaced populations (or migrated for economic reasons) and women who interact with these men (family members, partners, etc.); and
- A draft report expected by April 2009.

#### ***4.2. Voices of Youth in Post-Conflict Burundi: Perspectives on Exclusion, Gender and Conflict<sup>1</sup>***

The study examines youth in post-conflict Burundi. Specific objectives of the research in Burundi were to examine: (a) how poor and excluded youth are faring and coping in the country's post-conflict environment; (b) how gender dynamics are playing out in Burundian society and how these may contribute to increased risk of renewed conflict; and (c) what the implications of findings are in terms of future policy and programming.

The research was based upon in-depth qualitative data collection as well as a review of ongoing youth programs and policies in Burundi. The report has been finalized, discussed with the Government of Burundi and findings have been disseminated in-country through workshops as well as radio programs in local language. The report will be published in April 2009.

The reports shows that, despite the hardships, suffering and struggles associated with years of conflict and the post-conflict period that has followed, young people remain a positive force in Burundi. Concerns about large groups of 'angry young men' and the risks they may pose to renewed conflict would appear to be unfounded in Burundi today, at least among the general population of youth. Rather young people, male and female, display remarkable levels of optimism, motivation, perseverance, and resiliency, even in the face of adversity, obstacles and their history of conflict. Ex-combatants do not appear to pose a particular risk, perhaps with the exception of the self-demobilized who were not eligible for formal demobilization and reintegration benefits. A window of opportunity thus appears to present itself to take advantage of the energy, vitality and potential of young people, given in particular the overwhelming needs in post-conflict Burundi.

---

<sup>1</sup> The field research as well as analysis of data for both the Burundi and Rwanda study was undertaken from June 2006 to December 2007 with other trust fund resources.

### ***4.3. Voices and Views: Youth in Post-conflict Rwanda from a Poverty and Gender Perspective***

The research aimed to: (a) understand how poor youth are coping in post-conflict Rwanda; (b) identify if youth pose a major risk to renewed violence because of the conditions they face; (c) examine how gender dynamics and social institutions influence the conditions of youth and if they represent a risk factor; (d) examine government policies and programs in place to support poor youth; and (e) identify the implications of findings in terms of policy and programming.

The research was based upon in-depth qualitative data collection as well as a review of ongoing youth programs and policies in Rwanda.

Overall, and despite concerted Rwandan government efforts, the research paints a rather worrisome picture of poor youth in Rwanda today. In urban areas, many, if not most, poor urban youth endure conditions of extreme poverty and social isolation, which has led to a deep sense of despair. In rural areas, the housing crisis and its intersection with male youth frustration and fear of failure is a concern. Rigid gender expectations further limit youth and contribute to their sense of frustration and entrapment. Whilst the findings do not suggest an imminent risk of conflict or violence among young men, they do indicate that some poor youth could be vulnerable to influence and exploitation. The research findings show, however, that youth are turning to and seeking support, particularly from their government. Coupled with the fact that youth represent a key asset in Rwanda's recovery and future development, this presents a strong case for strengthening youth-oriented interventions.

### ***4.4 Gender Based Violence***

In armed conflicts, GBV including rape, sexual and other physical violence and harassment are often used as tools of war. In the DRC, reports of rapes against women and children, and increasingly men, are common, especially in eastern DRC. Perpetrators of GBV include progressively more civilians, especially in post-conflict areas. The new law against GBV (passed in 2006), as well as the current international attention GBV is receiving, particularly in eastern DRC, have contributed to an augmented visibility of the problem. There seems to be a consensus, however, that the conflict has added new levels of cruelty and has seen an increase in the age range of victims. Poverty, the weak judicial system, traditional beliefs in sorcery, the lower social status of women, changes in social roles and responsibilities of women in conflict areas are some of the potential causes mentioned in-country for the high levels of GBV.

Research indicates that victims of GBV without adequate gender-sensitive support addressing their particular needs often become limited in their social and economic capacity due to a lack of access to resources and/or employment based on gender; physical and/or psychological injury from violence; and sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). While GBV is manifested in many forms, one severe form is the stigmatization – and often outright shunning – of returning victims of GBV. This exclusion is not only

harmful to the socio-economic reintegration of women, but it is also highly detrimental to rebuilding peace, security and social cohesion at the community and country.

While GBV can not be addressed directly through the MDRP country programs, LEAP is providing technical support to: (a) increase knowledge on operational best practices of GBV programs, (b) increase linkage between D&R and GBV programs, and (c) provide TA to develop GBV program in Eastern DRC.

LEAP implemented assessment missions to DRC (Kinshasa, Maniema and South Kivu) to identify the main challenges, which include:

- (a) High levels of GBV, especially in Eastern DRC;
- (b) Varying capacity of NGOs addressing GBV;
- (c) Multi-sectoral services for GBV victims tend to be more successful;
- (d) Sexuality as a general taboo;
- (e) Need to differentiate between emergency humanitarian aid and longer term strategies;
- (f) Limited involvement of state structures;
- (g) Lack of capable leadership or leadership commitment;
- (h) Impunity linked to overall weak judicial system;
- (i) Limited understanding of causes of high levels of GBV in Eastern DRC; and
- (j) Lack of programs addressing male needs (as victims as well as family members of victims of GBV).

In addition, LEAP supported a mapping of programs addressing GBV carried out in North and South Kivu to assess existing gaps in current programming; as well as an ongoing literature review of best practices of GBV programs in conflict-affected countries in SSA with a focus on MDRP countries including DRC and Uganda, in the areas of, among others, (a) health services, (b) judiciary and legal frameworks, (c) economic empowerment or training, (d) community reintegration, and (e) psycho-social support.

As a result, a GBV pilot is being prepared in South Kivu, Eastern DRC, which will be funded through the World Bank's State and Peace Building Fund. The program would: (a) support victims of GBV and their family members through medical, psychological and socio-economic reintegration support, (b) support prevention and community engagement activities, and (c) generate knowledge on gender and GBV, highlighting the role of masculinities in GBV.

In addition, LEAP is supporting a small pilot in Bukavu, South Kivu, to initiate training on trauma-treatment mental health services for survivors of war and violence, especially women and children (ongoing). The pilot responds to the insufficient availability, adequacy and access of mental health services for the locally affected population, especially victims of GBV. For the training, Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) is taught as a core element of the skill training. Furthermore the participants learn how to screen for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and related trauma spectrum disorders, as well as gain basic counseling skills.

Finally, the African Development Bank and LEAP are currently preparing a conference on GBV in DRC. The main objective of the workshop would be to bring together stakeholders active in GBV programs to share good practices in GBV programs and strengthen their capacity to implement sustainable and cost-effective programs. The workshop would bring together national and international NGOs, UN agencies and bi- and multilateral donors active in DRC, as well as practitioners from other countries in the region with experiences in innovative and good practices to address the issues outlined above. The workshop would be co-sponsored by the AfDB and LEAP.

## **5. LEAP II**

The World Bank is currently preparing LEAP II, a new regional multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) to continue supporting gender and conflict work in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA). LEAP II aims to contribute to peace and security in SSA by supporting gender-sensitive activities related to insecurity and violence in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries in the region. Specific objectives are:

- To mainstream gender in D&R programs in the GLR that would be supported by the Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program;
- To support innovative gender approaches to address gender issues related to conflict and post-conflict, with a focus on GBV, Women Associated with the Fighting Forces, and young men at-risk; and
- To generate knowledge and good practice on addressing gender and conflict issues in SSA which builds on the current knowledge base and pays attention to exploring linkages between masculinity, peace and security to push current knowledge beyond retrospective rhetoric to operational reality.