

MDRP publishes Working Paper on youth and DDR in Burundi

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A study examining issues of masculinity and youth that was partly sponsored by the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) has also been valuable in assessing the situation of ex-combatants in Burundi.

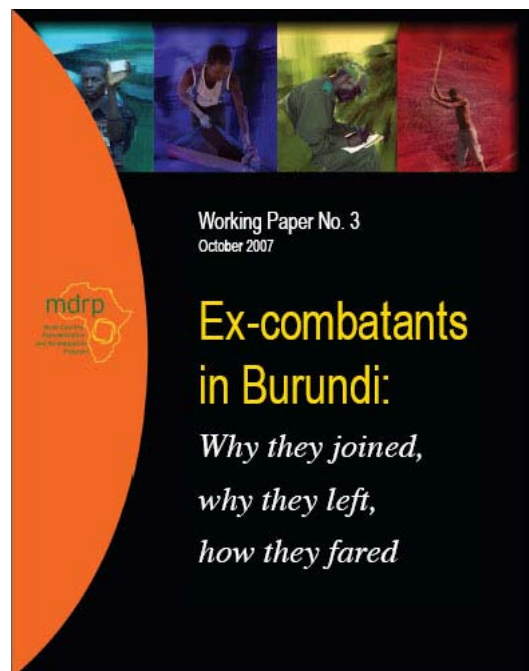
The study was conducted by Peter Uvin, Professor of International Humanitarian Studies & Director of the Institute for Human Security at the Fletcher School. For his research, Prof. Uvin interviewed approximately 400 Burundians across a large social spectrum in both urban and rural areas.

Interviews were kept relatively unstructured, allowing for the young Burundians to openly speak about their lives. “I wanted them to tell me what they wanted to tell me, and not simply what I wanted to hear,” explained Uvin.

In a separate Working Paper, *Ex-combatants in Burundi: Why they joined, why they left, how they fared*, Uvin focused on the status of the 63 ex-combatants among his original sample of 400 interviewees. Comparing young men who had been involved in combat to those who had not, provided a useful means to evaluate the success of the current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process in the region.

Uvin separates the young men’s motives for joining an armed group into two categories. Some joined for proactive reasons, because of an ideology or specific political agenda. Others joined later for reactive reasons related to the undesirable circumstances created by war.

Whatever their initial motivation, Uvin states that, amongst both groups, “The majority...wanted to stop fighting. This was the case because they had suffered too much, had become wounded, or felt that they had won and it was time to move back to normal life.”



News & Noteworthy



Prof. Peter Uvin

Uvin also examines how these men view the future in order to assess whether DDR activities have had an impact on ex-combatant reintegration. Uvin found a marked distinction between those who received DDR assistance and those who self-demobilized and thus were not supported through a DDR program. Of those interviewed, only 40% of the self-demobilized reported having plans, as opposed to 85% of those who received assistance. Clearly, writes Uvin, "...there is good reason to attribute this difference to the DDR program."

Additional factors that influence an ex-combatant's probability for success and consequently his hopes for the future

include six distinct areas: urban vs. rural; migratory situation; economic situation of the families; age; health; and gender. Sarah Michael, MDRP Social Development Specialist, is particularly interested in the distinction between urban and rural. She states; "...the paper's exploration of the different experiences of ex-combatants returning to urban versus rural settings will be particularly valuable in refining reintegration support in Burundi and could have useful implications for reintegration programming for war-affected populations in other countries as well."

With regards to social reintegration, the report suggests that, in general, communities are not opposed to accepting ex-combatants' return. "...Burundians seem, in this and other respects, amazingly capable of accepting wayward sheep into the fold, of integrating people into the community."

Although future prospects for some Burundian ex-combatants may seem bleak, Uvin concludes on a positive note and proposes that creative work can be done to tackle the challenges ahead. Specifically, by finding ways to support the self-demobilized and creating specialized assistance for the urban and rural beneficiaries.

For more information on MDRP, please visit www.mdrp.org or contact Bruno Donat, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at info@mdrp.org.