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**DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND
REINTEGRATION OF EX-COMBATANTS
(DDR) IN AFGHANISTAN: CONSTRAINTS
AND LIMITED CAPABILITIES**

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Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of ex-combatants (DDR) in Afghanistan: constraints and limited capabilities

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The debate on DDR: targets and priorities

After its introduction in the early 1990s, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) experiences have been widely discussed in the scholarly and policy-oriented literature. It is generally recognised that the reintegration of ex-combatants is a complex process that has political, economic, social and psychological components. It is also recognised that combatants and communities have been transformed by wars, especially in countries where conflicts lasted for many years. In many countries, combatants have no memory of peacetime and sometimes those who committed atrocities in their own communities are unable to return to their areas of origin.³ Increasingly, it has been argued that as economic incentives have become the primary reason for fighting, the same prevails in the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants into society: especially in the long term, once the general security environment and political process are on the right track.⁴ As demonstrated from the outset of the DDR programmes in the Nicaraguan experience,⁵ political choices that do not take into account a proper reintegration of ex-combatants can lead to a resumption of hostilities. Under the new government elected in 1990, the ‘Contras’ were marginalised by the new ruling business elites that had once backed them. Frustrated by the failure to fulfil the promises of reintegration, a substantial number resumed the war in the north of the country. At the same time, soldiers dismissed from the Sandinista army, without having received any concrete offer of reintegration, reorganised themselves into new armed groups and joined the war as well.⁶

Discussing the contribution of DDR in setting the ground for a sustainable (positive) peace in the aftermath of conflicts, Baaré introduced a distinction between ‘transitional economic reintegration’ and ‘developmental reintegration’. He suggested that many of the classic reintegration packages offered to ex-combatants, from reinsertion support to vocational training and micro-credit assistance are in reality - contrary to the traditional belief or affirmation of donor agencies - short-term, security-oriented interventions. Moreover, he stated that military elites will try to manipulate ‘transitional economic reintegration’, with

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³ See Batchelor and Kingma, 2004 for a discussion.

⁴ Berdal, 1996.

⁵ Based on personal observation by SR in Nicaragua.

⁶ Bendaña, 1999.

the objective of transforming existing patronage systems to retain control over ex-combatants.⁷ Thus, he suggested looking for exit strategies from targeted reintegration assistance and addressing the concerns of long-term development through non-targeted poverty reduction assistance.⁸ Baaré is not alone in supporting the idea that the scope of reintegration programmes should be enlarged by keeping an individual approach with ex-combatants, while addressing their needs along with those of the other war-affected groups, which would also avoid the risk that an exclusive focus on ex-combatants might cause frustration and conflict with other people who may be more affected by the war.⁹

A good example of the non-targeted approach is that of the United Nations inter-agency programme for displaced persons, refugees and returnees (PRODERE).¹⁰ PRODERE used an integrated local development approach for the recovery of war-affected areas, combining infrastructure rebuilding and economic recovery with reconciliation and the political participation of all local stakeholders. As part of the programme's approach to local development, Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs) were created with technical support from the International Labour Organisation.¹¹ In the communities in which they operated, the LEDAs supported the ex-combatants' reintegration, although they were not directly oriented to this.¹² However, the failure of the Liberian reintegration initiative weakened the argument in favour of a non-targeted approach.¹³

A related problem identified in the literature is the need to generate trust between former enemies and the population as a whole. The creation of new and legitimate structures for military and police forces¹⁴ is imperative for repairing relations of reciprocity and building social trust. A study by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion recognises that the basic condition for the creation of a new army lies in establishing trust between warring factions.¹⁵ While peace agreements frequently include the integration of warring factions into one military force, in principle accountable to elected bodies and recognised as legitimate by the population, in practice there have been several failures in this regard. In Angola, the failure to create a unified Angolan army contributed to the resumption of the civil war. In Mozambique and Cambodia the peace processes risked being undermined because of an inability to restructure the security sector.

⁷ Basré, 2005.

⁸ Basré, 2005.

⁹ Specht, 2003; Kingma, 2000a:225; Specht, 2004.

¹⁰ PRODERE was a UNDP programme meant to facilitate the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in Central America.

¹¹ Nieto, 1994; SR's own experience as she worked as ILO expert in one of the LEDAs.

¹² See Specht, 1998. Communities, particularly in the rural areas, participated in the reintegration process in El Salvador. In a particularly difficult area of the country, an international NGO programme (led by SR) addressed the problem of the resentment caused by the privileged position of ex-combatants with respect to other war-affected groups in the transfer of land, through the implementation of a participatory Environmental Assessment and Landscape Planning aimed at generating a proposal for local development which included all war-affected groups.

¹³ Evaluations of the programme highlighted the adoption of a non-targeted approach to the reintegration of ex-combatants as one of the causes for combatants to resume the war (UNDP, 2005a). However, much more can be said about the Liberian DDR, starting from the lack of the necessary funds and political will for its implementation. Specht and van Empel are among the authors who defend the non-targeted approach in the Liberian experience (Specht and van Empel, 1998).

¹⁴ Berdal, 1996

¹⁵ BICC, 2000.

In recent years the literature has been warning of the risk that DDR might contribute both to the establishment of virtuous circles of security and development¹⁶ and to the opposite: that is, fuelling the vicious circles of the ‘conflict trap’¹⁷ which, in the aftermath of conflicts, may be in a condition of evolution into new kinds of social orders that are violent, exploitative and illiberal and that will not necessarily culminate in a revived central government.¹⁸ Indeed, Somalia was beginning to be discussed as a good example of this ‘evolution of the conflict trap’ significantly before the start, and even the planning, of DDR in Afghanistan.¹⁹ With 60,000 ex-combatants working as private security guards in Mogadishu, reintegration looks more like a façade than real conversion. In other words, the ex-combatants’ reintegration is doomed to fail unless it is accompanied by the conversion of the entire war mode of production.²⁰

The literature also showed that there are no agreed criteria for measuring the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of DDRs and how weapons collection has become *de facto* the most widely used indicator, implying a bias towards disarmament as opposed to reintegration.²¹ The massive and expensive use of ‘vocational training’ in the reintegration processes has also been criticised on the grounds that, although vocational training might seem a smart measure to balance security and rights, it does not lead to economic reintegration in a developmental sense, due to the difficulty of trained combatants finding employment in the post-war economy.²²

Drawing on existing experiences and scholarly analysis, and applying it to the Afghan case at a time when DDR was being planned, Özerdem stressed the need for a review of the traditional sequencing of DDR processes. He also argued that “if security concerns start to overcome the reintegration strategy’s economic objectives, then it is likely to result in ad-hoc initiatives with unsustainable consequences”.²³ If we agree with Berdal that “*lasting* success in meeting the challenge of reintegrating arms and soldiers into society...depends largely on the extent to which short-term concerns about security and political stability are not only addressed, but also effectively reconciled with long-term strategies for economic reconstruction and development”,²⁴ then the analysis of reintegration in Afghanistan has much to say about security and development in the country.

DDR in Afghanistan: a political process

Although there are many technical issues to be addressed in the discussion about DDR in Afghanistan, there is no doubt that it was a political process from beginning to end. This is because it was part of a wider programme of security reform, including the ministries of defence, interior and justice, but also because of the way it was conceived and implemented.

¹⁶ As discussed in Collier, 2003; Stewart, 2004.

¹⁷ See Collier, 2000; Collier 2003.

¹⁸ As argued in Menkhaus, 2004.

¹⁹ See Kingma, 2000b, and Keen, 2001.

²⁰ Specht, 2003.

²¹ Hansen, 2000:42; Muggah, 2005; Pouligny, 2004.

²² Baaré, 2005 and Özerdem 2003.

²³ Özerdem, 2002:402.

²⁴ Berdal, 1999, p. 8.

Due to the opposition of the militia leaders, the Bonn agreement (2001) did not include any explicit reference to DDR, but only stated that the militias, to be brought under the authority of the Ministry of Defence as a national army, would be reorganised “according to the requirements”.²⁵ After Bonn, as the international community started pushing for DDR in Afghanistan, a number of different plans were circulated, reflecting the diverging interests of the various players involved. Deputy Defence Minister Baryalai (who was in charge of DDR but who, at the same time, was closely identified with the interests of the militias from whose ranks he came) proposed a plan whose main feature was the reorganisation of the militias into a newly trained National Army (ANA), with the commanders being appointed officers. The plan sponsored by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the US embassy and others was quite different and it involved forming the ANA from scratch with only limited recruitment from the militias.²⁶ This is the plan that was finally adopted, after much foot-dragging by the Ministry of Defence. Ultimately, the fact that international donors were only ready to support the UNAMA/US plan was the decisive factor in winning the resistance of the Ministry. The management of DDR was entrusted to the United Nations Development Programme, which created the ad-hoc Afghanistan New Beginning Program (ANBP) that was supposed to work in strict cooperation with the Ministry of Defence. Another achievement of the international community was the imposition of an upper ceiling on the number of ex-combatants to be demobilised. Initially, the number was set at 100,000 but later it was cut down to 60,000, thus limiting the ability of militia commanders to use demobilisation and reintegration as tools of patronage and self-enrichment.

On the surface, therefore, despite the two-year delay, the DDR programme in Afghanistan seemed set to make a positive start, as the international community managed to impose its own agenda. Indeed, the ANBP did claim success at all stages of the process, once again citing the number of weapons collected as proof.²⁷ Even on this count, however, success was relative. By the end of disarmament, according to ANBP figures over 70,000 weapons had been collected from 63,380 ex-combatants, corresponding to just 56 per cent of the weapons previously registered, suggesting that the militias managed to hand over as little as possible. The quality and serviceability of the weapons collected was also not always very good.²⁸ Moreover, the Ministry of Defence, and by extension the militia commanders, maintained control over key aspects of DDR, chiefly the ability to select the names of the (presumed) ex-combatants to be demobilised and reintegrated. In theory, a degree of external supervision over the process of selection of the ex-combatants was to be provided through the institution of eight Regional Verification Committees, each composed of one governmental representative, one ANBP representative and three village elders. However, the power of the local commanders was a deterrent for the elderly members of the Verification Committees to play their role in the identification of the combatants,²⁹ and in practice “the decision on who to disarm was the business of local commanders”.³⁰

²⁵ See the Bonn Agreement, V. Final Provisions, which among other locations can be found at <http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>.

²⁶ For more details see B. Rubin, 2003, p. 4-5.

²⁷ Both the website (<http://www.undpanbp.org/>) and the issues of the ANBP bulletin reported with evidence statistics about the number of weapons collected.

²⁸ According to UNAMA sources, 36% of the weapons collected were either unserviceable or bad Pakistani copies (AG’s communication with Eckart Schiewek, November 2005).

²⁹ SR’s interview with ANBP Mobile Disarmament Units official, in Herat 22/03/05.

³⁰ SR’s interview in Kabul, April 2005 with former observer of DDR process for the Japanese government.

In part, the DDR process might have been weakened by the US “disengagement” or lack of interest in it.³¹ There is a divergence of opinion over why the US showed little interest in participating in the DDR programme. According to an ANBP official,³² the US has never had an interest in DDR, while according to a USAID official,³³ the lack of US participation in DDR is the result of the “jealousy” and “incompetence” shown by the ANBP. Whatever the case, such lack of participation was widely perceived as strengthening the hand of the local commanders. At one point, Japanese experts even floated the idea of moving straight towards reintegration without implementing the disarmament phase.³⁴ Although this position was justified in terms of the need to allow ex-combatants to hold onto weapons for self-defence because no legitimate institution could assure their security once demobilised, it is very likely that Japan - as well as all the other donor countries - was not very keen to get involved in an area strongly opposed by warlords and commanders.³⁵ In the end, the Japanese government finally accepted the US position that disarmament had to come first, although it is not obvious that this happened because it had revised its earlier assessment.³⁶ Özerdem’s call for a review of the traditional sequencing of DDR went unheeded. Moreover, despite the delay in starting the programme, little had been done in terms of establishing a legitimate police force, contrary to what was recommended in most of the literature.

As a result, the DDR process was skewed in favour of the interests of high and middle-rank militia commanders. A variety of cases of manipulation of lists of combatants introduced to DDR have been reported by different sources. Issues related to phoney combatants spanned from abuse and manipulation by local commanders, to falsification of official ANBP computerised identification cards,³⁷ to specific requests from civilians to the commanders to be introduced into the process.³⁸ It was clear that whenever cash was handed out to “ex-combatants”, much of it ended up in the pockets of their commanders.³⁹ There was also a clear regional bias in the distribution of the benefits of DDR, as Table 1 and Figure 1 clearly illustrate. Out of 8 regions, the two (Kabul and Kunduz) which were completely under the control of Shura-i Nezar accounted for almost 56 per cent of all DDR-ed militiamen, while almost half of DDR-ed ex-combatants from Mazar-i-Sharif also belonged to the same faction, which happened to be the faction in control of the Ministry of Defence. The five remaining regions had to content themselves with just 33 per cent of the total.

³¹ On this see Rubin, 2003, p. 7-8.

³² SR’s interview in Kabul, April 2005.

³³ SR’s interview in Kabul, May 2005.

³⁴ JICA official, interviewed by SR in Kabul, May 2005. JICA is the official agency for international cooperation of the Japanese government.

³⁵ An ACBAR official, interviewed by SR in Kabul in April 2005, confirmed that differences between the Japanese and the Americans concerned the implementation of the MoD’s reforms, prior to DDR implementation.

³⁶ In the opinion of a JICA official (SR’s interview, Kabul, May 2005), the Japanese decided to follow the US view because they wanted to be part of the ‘war on terror’.

³⁷ SR had the opportunity to witness this case during her field research.

³⁸ During an interview (SR) with AGEF official in Kabul, 24/04/05, he reported a case of villagers that asked the local commander to be introduced to DDR to benefit from the reintegration grant. The villagers returned part of the grant to the commander. AGEF is a German NGO and one of ANBP’s Implementing Partners (IP).

³⁹ AG’s interviews with UN and ANBP officials, Kunduz, 2003-2004.

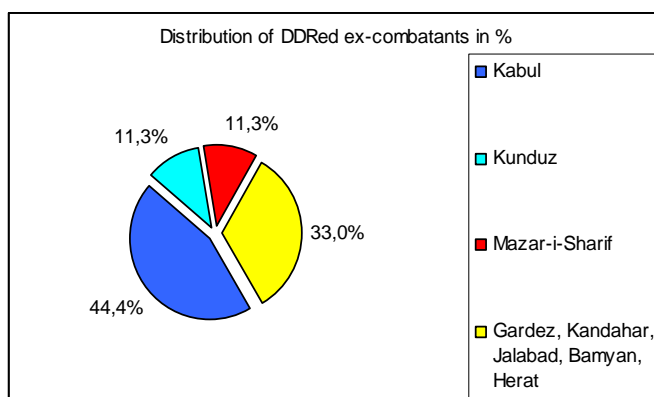
Table 1

Source: ANBP

Regions	Distribution of DDR-ed ex-combatants in %
Kabul	44.40
Kunduz	11.30
Mazar-i-Sharif	11.30
Gardez, Kandahar, Jalabad, Bamyan, Herat	33.00
Total	100.00

Figure 1

Source: ANBP



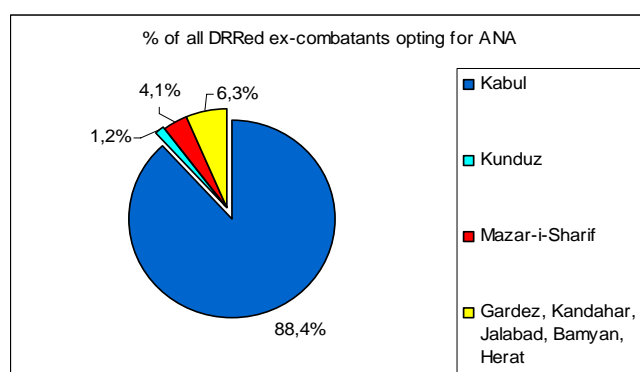
The Ministry of Defence would have defended this regional bias with the argument, not altogether unreasonable, that most genuine ex-combatants were actually from the Kabul and Kunduz regions. However, since it is estimated that up to 80 per cent of people that entered the DDR process were phoney combatants, most of those DDR-ed in these two regions must have been phoney too.⁴⁰ Moreover, although US plans for the creation of a new national army allowed for only 10 to 20 per cent of all recruits to come from the ranks of the DDR-ed militias, the Ministry of Defence managed to allocate that reduced quota almost entirely to Shura-i Nezar's militias, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. Kabul's region, the core of Shura-i Nezar's militias, represented almost nine-tenths of all former militiamen allowed into the ANA.

⁴⁰ UNAMA report cited in Dennys, 2005, p. 4. See also Giustozzi, 2005, pp. 17-19. In Kunduz, the first few militia units to be demobilised had to "remobilise" in order to fit the quotas of men to be DDR-ed assigned to them.

Table 2

Source: ANBP

Region(s)	% of all DRR-ed ex-combatants opting for ANA
Kabul	88.4
Kunduz	1.2
Mazar-i-Sharif	4.1
Gardez, Kandahar, Jalabad, Bamyan, Herat	6.3
Total	100.0

**Figure 2**

Source: ANBP

Despite the limitations deriving from the political context within which it had to be implemented, if nothing else the US\$150 million programme arguably still had considerable potential to have an impact on Afghan perceptions concerning what peace and international assistance could bring to the war-ravaged country. In particular, the reintegration part of the programme allowed for greater room to manoeuvre without too much direct influence from the former commanders.

Moreover, the impact of DDR was also minimised by the large-scale incorporation of former militiamen into the police force, which was not subject to DDR. Even if this incorporation had nothing to do with the DDR programme as such,⁴¹ it was an important limitation to its potential for success and contributed greatly to the 'evolution of the conflict trap' in Afghanistan.

Reintegration: a test of implementation skills

The Afghan process of reintegration is quite complex. ANBP has sub-contracted about 30 Implementing Partners (IPs) to provide the reintegration services, which include government institutions (Ministry of Education), international agencies (International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Food Programme, UN Office for Project Services, Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan), international and national NGOs, and private firms (Roshan mobile phone, private entrepreneurs). The

⁴¹ According to ANBP statistics, only 0.3% of DDR-ed ex-combatants were incorporated into the police force.

original idea behind the use of IPs was to facilitate the follow up of ex-combatants in their reintegration and to offer them specialised support in each reintegration area.

In theory, two weeks after demobilisation, ex-combatants were supposed to start the reintegration process supported by a case worker (an ANBP member of staff), who would be in charge of assessing the skills and aspirations of ex-combatants and offering them the following basic options for their reintegration (options vary depending on the region):

1. **agriculture and livestock packages** for those returning to their farms, which include seeds, fertilisers, agricultural tools, livestock, and training;
2. **vocational training** courses, including literacy courses;
3. support to start-up **small businesses** as well as to expand existing businesses, either owned by the ex-combatants or in partnership with other small entrepreneurs;
4. **on-the-job vocational training** courses, implemented with the support of small entrepreneurs willing to hire and train the ex-combatants;
5. **teacher training** consisting of a five month training course with the Ministry of Education;
6. opportunity to join the **de-mining corps**;
7. training for soldiers and former officers who wish to apply for **training as army officers**;
8. opportunity to join the **ANA and the Afghan National Police**;
9. Short-term, public-infrastructure **wage labour** as a bridging activity.

Theoretically, the selection of one of these options was supposed to be a voluntary choice made by each ex-combatant, who - once demobilised - would become a 'caseload' moved from the ANBP's caseworkers to the IPs' local staff. Theoretically, this stage should have consisted of an individual assessment of each ex-combatant's needs and capacity and of counselling on the selection of a reintegration option. The reality was closer to a busy bureaucratic activity of the collection of an ex-combatant's general data followed by transfer to an IP's local staff.

The implementation mechanism adopted by ANBP was that of targeted assistance within a sectoral approach. Targeted assistance considers ex-combatants to be a homogeneous group, despite the fact that, in the Afghan reality, ex-combatants cannot be classified into one unique category. Afghan ex-combatants range from full-time to part-time soldiers, from volunteers to forced recruits, from *jihadis* to former soldiers of the communist regime, from combatants of the civil war to anti-Taliban forces, from literate members of the elite and tribal aristocracy to illiterate poor peasants and so on. The sectoral approach implies the reintegration of ex-combatants into the economic sectors mentioned above, assigning each ex-combatant to a specific sector without consideration of the whole reintegration environment. This simplifies the procedures, but at the price of risking wasting some of the potential benefits of the financial resources and technical assistance for the sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants as well as for the more general economic recovery process.

Moreover, the targeted and sectoral mechanisms have caused duplication of effort. Apart from the case of the IOM in the northern region,⁴² different IPs have been in charge of the

⁴²In the northern provinces IOM is ANBP's only IP, a fact which gave it the possibility to develop a holistic reintegration process, inserting the reintegration of the ex-combatants into a wider strategy of recovery for the region. However, the IOM decided to sub-contract to an international NGO and two national NGOs, entrusting them with the agriculture and livestock packages and the vocational training courses. Since no coordination

reintegration process in the same village or community. This has not led to specialised reintegration support, as had been the intention of ANBP, but to an overlapping of presences in the same area, for the same programme, in an uncoordinated manner.⁴³ This situation, as highlighted by a Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development official, has hindered any systemic planning for the activation of local development strategies.⁴⁴

The implementation of a reintegration programme using targeted assistance for a fluid number from an unknown population requires at least several months of preparation, good logistical capacity and bureaucratic flexibility. The long gap currently existing between demobilisation and reintegration is a clear symptom that the programme lacked these three conditions. According to Yukari Ota, a former ANBP programme advisor, the average country-level time gap between the demobilisation and reintegration phase was about 35 days, and in some regions, such as the north, it was two to three months.⁴⁵ If the time ex-combatants spend with the IPs before being effectively ready for reintegration is also included, this gap could be as long as six months. A group of about fifteen ex-combatants protesting in front of an IP's compound complained that their waiting time ranges from three to six months. Based on other ex-combatants' experience and due to the fact that they have not received any justification from the IP, the northern ex-combatants were convinced that protesting in front of the IP's compound was the only way to gain assistance.⁴⁶

The waiting time during the reintegration process depends also on each IP's own procedures and logistical capacity, as well as on their understanding of the programme's goal. Facing the lack of general guidelines, each IP has generated its own *modus operandi* not only at the procedural level, but also at programme-policy level. Thus, in some cases the programme's goal has been redefined,⁴⁷ while in other cases differences have been recorded in the delivery of reintegration assistance.

This lack of common guidelines and methodology suggests deficient programme planning. Undoubtedly, difficulties due to the security conditions of the country and thus the limited access to both the beneficiaries and the countryside, as well as the obstacles caused by the political situation, cannot be disregarded. Nevertheless, since the start of the programme was postponed on several occasions, there was no shortage of time to undertake an assessment of the ex-combatants' (re-)integration environment, as well as their needs and potential, and to plan the reintegration activities in advance.

strategy aimed at promoting a systemic process of reintegration has been established between IOM and its sub-contractors, even in this case the sector-based system of ANBP has been once again reproduced.

⁴³ The situation of the Central region is particularly interesting. IOM and AGERF are implementing reintegration in the same villages and, more likely, with ex-combatants coming from the same families, using a completely different methodology (for example, the IOM uses an 'in kind' system of support while AGERF uses a cash system). Although both organisations are aware of this situation, there are no coordination efforts between them.

⁴⁴ SR's interview with an MRRD official in Kapisa, May 2005.

⁴⁵ SR's interview in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

⁴⁶ SR's interviews during one of ex-combatants' frequent protests in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

⁴⁷ As an example we present three IPs' programme goals: "To deliver reintegration services to Former Combatants in the North, in order to promote stable and prosperous Afghan society" (IP's programme goal, Northern region, programme document). "To contribute to the rehabilitation of the labour market and the revitalisation of social and economic activities in the Western provinces of Afghanistan..." (IP's programme goal, Western region, programme document). "To help the ex-combatants, who have access to land, to explore livelihood opportunities through initiatives in agriculture sector" (IP's programme goal, Southern region, programme document).

Nevertheless, the programme was planned in an abstract way⁴⁸ based on ‘numbers’ received from warlords and commanders, and when it confronted the reality ‘on the ground’, its weaknesses became a factor in the creation of vicious circles of individual and collective vulnerabilities. At the individual level, ex-combatants were not provided with the necessary tools to face up to their reintegration in an economy that had little to offer and was dominated by new systems of patronage. This had a negative impact on the organisation of ex-combatants’ households’ and on communities’ livelihoods. In order to survive and sustain their livelihoods, ex-combatants and community members had to reinforce the very patron-client relationship with warlords and local commanders that the DDR programme aims to “break down”.⁴⁹ The following case reported from Mazar-i-Sharif is illustrative of the failures of the reintegration process caused by the lack of feasibility studies, the lack of attention to the general reintegration environment and new patronage system, and the generation of new vulnerabilities that keep the poorest inhabitants subordinated to the power of local commanders. A former combatant started a wood burning activity with his reintegration grant, to produce charcoal for selling. The activity was based inside an ancient prison that had been almost destroyed. In the same place there were another fifteen people involved in the same kind of activity. They declared that :

“the wood is provided by a commander who is illegally exploiting a governmental forest. Recently, the government decided to re-take control over the forest and give it in concession to an enterprise. If so, we will lose our jobs. We cannot do anything else than to protest in front of the government office and start to smuggle the wood from the forest. This activity is just enough to survive in the winter, but during the summer season we must seek another job. ...we are poor, we have neither the money nor the knowledge to take the forest-concession”.⁵⁰

The lack of previous assessments has also impeded the realisation of proper counselling sessions. The ANBP caseworkers lacked information for providing proper counselling to the ex-combatants, so the counselling session has become a simple data registration activity. Moreover, this became somewhat cumbersome, with the IPs’ local staff having to repeat the process of re-registering and ‘re-counselling’ the ex-combatants in exactly the same bureaucratic way. This chaotic process, coupled with institutional bureaucratic inflexibility, has led to a duplication of activities and costs, while at the same time it has not supported ex-combatants in the selection of their reintegration option. According to an ANBP official⁵¹ each ex-combatant’s personal data was analysed to verify if his option suited his situation and, accordingly, he was assigned to a specialised IP. However, according to an Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Cooperation (AGEF) official⁵² in the North-East region, “[AGEF] receives the ex-combatants that ANBP does not know where to

⁴⁸ As emerged from the interview with an ANBP official, the programme was planned by one ANBP senior officer and two junior officers, as a desk exercise in Kabul (SR’s interview with an ANBP official in Kabul, May 2005).

⁴⁹ This relationship emerged in several locations during SR’s field research. Unfortunately, in some places this patron-client relationship was reinforced by the IPs’ implementation system. In the north, an IP organized training courses and a pilot project inside the houses of two former commanders, so backing their position of power and wealth among the ex-combatants and villagers.

⁵⁰ SR’s interview with ex-combatant and his business neighbours in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005. Analysing this case, it was argued by IP staff that the reintegration process did not fail as the ex-combatant did not return to fighting, a symptom of an attitude that defers the real reintegration problem by keeping the ex-combatants busy struggling in the market to survive (see Baaré, 2005, Kingma, 2000a, Specht, 2004).

⁵¹ SR’s interview in Kabul, May 2005.

⁵² SR’s interview in Kabul, April 2005.

place, so that there is a general lack of interest from the ex-combatants in the activities offered by AGEF. The ex-combatants participate only in the paid activities". AGEF's declaration has been generally confirmed by the ex-combatants in other regions, who complained that they are forced to accept the reintegration option suggested by ANBP. During a focus group discussion in Kabul, an ex-combatant complained that he was not allowed to opt for the agriculture option because this option was not allowed to ex-combatants over 45 years of age. He was advised to opt for a small business.⁵³

Unfortunately, the system of forcing ex-combatants to select a specific reintegration package was also found in the case of some IPs. In these cases, the reintegration projects selected by the ex-combatants were approved or refused by the IP's staff based on their own evaluation of what the market trend was or on other arbitrary considerations.⁵⁴ This resulted in ex-combatants in the northern and western regions complaining about the arbitrary refusal of some kinds of business activities as reintegration options.⁵⁵ While the ex-combatants' own plans might have been unrealistic, the good intentions that formed the basis of the refusal of the reintegration projects were not based on technical studies, nor supported by proper market analysis or feasibility studies. As a result, damage done to the participatory aspects of the process might not have been compensated by real gains in terms of market positioning and feasibility. According to IOM's staff, the number of 'caseloads' that they were required 'to process' ruled out carrying out any serious feasibility study. IOM staff perceived themselves as squeezed between the Scylla of 'quantity' and the Charybdis of 'quality'.⁵⁶ Consequently, in the IOM case, the project feasibility study basically consisted of filling in a budget form in a very standardised way.⁵⁷

The anarchy of the system had some positive aspects too, since it allowed space for different choices. *Cooperazione Internazionale* (COOPI) carried out a pre-implementation general assessment of the situation covering different variables, from employment and income, to health and education, to water and sanitation. The data reported in the study highlighted the different sources that composed ex-combatants' families' livelihoods. Based on that, COOPI established a microcredit pilot experience addressed to 100 ex-combatants and aimed at supporting the diversification of families' livelihoods, establishing solidarity groups and involving the local *shuras*. However, the microcredit pilot had to be suspended as it was not allowed by the ANBP and COOPI had to deliver the classic agriculture reintegration package, even though their study showed that 21 per cent of ex-combatants were landless.⁵⁸ Thus, it is

⁵³ SR participation in focus group discussion in Kabul, April 2005. While the existence of a written rule of this kind was not confirmed by ANBP and its IPs, at least in the case of one IP, COOPI, it was not applied (SR interview with COOPI official in Kabul, May 2005). Furthermore, in the case reported the rule was rather illogical since the ex-combatant was illiterate and it would have been easier for him to manage an agriculture or livestock project. More likely, ANBP adopted this strategy motivated by the necessity to meet the quotas of ex-combatants assigned to each IP, so as to avoid the bureaucratic complication of having to modify the contracts signed with each IP.

⁵⁴ IOM Mazar-i-Sharif programme manager's declarations (SR's interview in Kabul, April 2005).

⁵⁵ SR's interviews with ex-combatants and SR's participation in focus-group discussion in Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat.

⁵⁶ SR's interviews with IOM officials and participation in the IOM workshop on the implementation of IOM's DDR programmes.

⁵⁷ During her research in Afghanistan, SR had the opportunity to attend several sessions of project elaboration for the ex-combatants' reintegration.

⁵⁸ It is not clear why the ANBP assigned the landless ex-combatants to COOPI for the agriculture reintegration. Most likely, before COOPI's assessment, the situation of these ex-combatants was unknown. SR's interview with COOPI official, in Kabul May 2005.

evident that in the Afghan DDR experience, recalling Smillie's argument,⁵⁹ the problem of linking real people with real opportunities – which is the developmental challenge – has not been taken into account, and this has been at the expense of long-term strategic sustainable reintegration.

COOPT's experience confirms that there is usually little understanding of the complexity of rural livelihoods by the donor community, and Afghanistan is no exception.⁶⁰ In Afghanistan, as elsewhere, households diversify their income sources either as a strategy of accumulation or as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, years of warfare, lack of governance and drought have seriously diminished the country's natural and physical capital; thus, labour migration as well as remittances and non-farm labour have assumed more importance in the diversification of rural livelihoods. Interviews carried out with ex-combatants confirmed this trend and also highlighted a widespread use of the credit system as a coping mechanism. The sectoral approach adopted in the Afghan DDR, as opposed to a more effective systemic approach to ex-combatants' livelihood strategies, has frequently required ex-combatants to adapt their livelihood strategies to the 'transitional reintegration' package offered, rather than vice-versa. This practice has contributed to reinforcing the Afghan 'bazaar economy'⁶¹ and the new patronage system. As a consequence, the landscape of ex-combatants' reintegration presents a generally poor performance in all the reintegration sectors.

In the small business sector, the short duration and inadequacy of business training, as well as the small reintegration grants⁶² (insufficient to start a proper enterprise), have not provided the market tools and power necessary for a small enterprise to survive in the Afghan 'bazaar economy'. After a few months of activity the small shops present a marked decline in their initial capital, their shelves look almost empty and equipment acquired with the grant has frequently been re-sold to the original vendor.⁶³ As an ex-combatant stated, "with the small grant received, we can work three or four months and then we become jobless again".⁶⁴ Indeed, the result of an evaluation carried out during the months of March, April and May 2005 showed that by then 30 per cent of monitored ex-combatants' small businesses had already folded.⁶⁵ Furthermore, findings from the same evaluation in the central region showed that of all the businesses monitored and still functioning, 54 per cent were run by an 'acting ex-combatant's partner'⁶⁶ or a family member, in many cases a child. On the other hand, ex-combatants who do run their small businesses lack the necessary experience and capital to deal with price instability and credit mechanisms. As a wealthy ex-commander explained, "in Herat, the prices of goods change depending on Iran's inflation, customs, and holiday days. When the customs post at the border with Iran is closed prices increase. It is

⁵⁹ Smillies, I. cited in Baaré, 2005.

⁶⁰ On this see also Ian Christophlos, 2004.

⁶¹ Here the concept refers to the co-existence and functional interchange between different economies, namely the illicit, shadow, donor, formal, informal, and coping economies in a big 'bazaar economy'. See on the subject also Schetter, 2002; and Goodhand, 2004.

⁶² The reintegration grant has been fixed at US\$ 700 for the small businesses, vocational training and agriculture and livestock packages.

⁶³ SR's interview with ex-combatant, Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

⁶⁴ Statement of an ex-combatant during a focus group debate in Kabul (SR's participation in the focus group).

⁶⁵ This evaluation was carried out by SR during her field research. She monitored a total of 65 ex-combatants' small business installations in three regions.

⁶⁶ A system of partnership with existing businessmen is favoured by the IOM Central region reintegration programme, being aware that the amount of the reintegration grant is not enough to open a business in Kabul and the other cities. However, in the majority of cases the partnership appears to have turned into a system to resell to the existing businessmen the goods and equipment received as a reintegration grant.

important to have this knowledge of the market to deal with prices”.⁶⁷ Grocery shops⁶⁸ mostly sell on credit to local consumers who on average take around one to one and a half months to repay the debt. Ex-combatants do not know how to deal with this mechanism, so they tend to give away an excessively large proportion of their capital in credit, becoming consequently unable to replace the stock. Furthermore, the shopkeeper’s family uses some of the goods for its own consumption, contributing to the erosion of the small business’s capital since products consumed by the family cannot be replaced.⁶⁹ As a result of both factors, shelves mostly look almost empty in these shops and businesses decline rapidly. However, the situation varies depending on the nature of the business and on ex-combatant’s market experience and ability to deal with the current patronage system of the Afghan market. Afghan markets are controlled by mafia-style organisations, which form a sort of oligopoly at every level of the market chain. Thus, new entrants are in competition with existing players for the necessary patronage and ‘protection’ from government officials and other power holders, as well as for space in the market.⁷⁰

As ex-combatants invest their working time and also their own money in the ‘transitional economic reintegration’,⁷¹ reorganising their livelihood strategies and subordinating themselves to patronage systems, the result of their failure produces household diseconomies of scale and, consequently, new individual and collective vulnerabilities. Indeed, it has been estimated from different sources that only about 30 to 40 per cent of ex-combatants’ small businesses will be able to remain in the market.⁷² This percentage is mainly composed of those ex-combatants who are already wealthy and well positioned in the market. An ANBP official, asked whether DDR might have increased the rich-poor divide, since the poorest among the ex-combatants have not been properly addressed, replied that “it is difficult for us to identify, at the beginning of the process, who are the poorest ones”.⁷³

Trends in the agricultural ‘transitional reintegration’ have not been much different from those for small businesses. Although some IPs offered different reintegration packages - such as livestock, fruit and forest trees, poultry, bee keeping and vegetable, wheat and cotton seeds, the ex-combatants’ main choice has been livestock (see Figure 3). Ex-combatants’ choices respond to their need to regenerate the household’s assets and to their realistic and pragmatic analysis of the recovery process. Indeed, factors of production indispensable to agriculture, such as irrigation systems, rural infrastructure and landed property have not been properly addressed. Likewise, an agricultural marketing policy has not been defined. This seems to

⁶⁷ SR’s interview in Herat, March 2005. As Afghan internal production is minimal, a large majority of goods are imported from Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, India and China.

⁶⁸ In the IOM database grocery shops represent about 60% of total ex-combatants’ small businesses (IOM data base updated at March 2005).

⁶⁹ The erosion of small businesses’ capital as a result of the credit mechanism and the family’s own consumption were reported in several interviews with ex-combatants during SR’s evaluation and have been confirmed by the findings of another evaluation carried out by USAID senior staff. Ex-combatants were specifically asked about the replacement of the initial stock because shops’ shelves looked almost empty.

⁷⁰ These elements were reported several times during SR’s interviews with ex-combatants and their business-neighbours who participated in the interviews carried out in the markets.

⁷¹ In the majority of cases, ex-combatants are required to supplement the reintegration grant with their own investment, usually paying rent of the small business premises, as a system to ensure ex-combatants’ commitment to work in the business activity. Frequently, ex-combatants complained that, due to the time they wait to receive their reintegration grant, their investment in the shops’ rent is unproductive and they waste their money. Moreover, in many cases, the ex-combatants borrow the money to rent business premises.

⁷² This percentage is derived from SR’s evaluation and the estimates of ANBP, AGEF, and IOM officials interviewed by SR.

⁷³ SR’s interview with ANBP official in Kabul, May 2005.

have resulted on the one hand in ex-combatants and farmers shifting from wheat production to poppy cultivation.⁷⁴ On the other hand, considering the instability of rural livelihoods and the high rate of indebtedness of rural households, livestock represents an asset that can be easily sold in times of crisis.

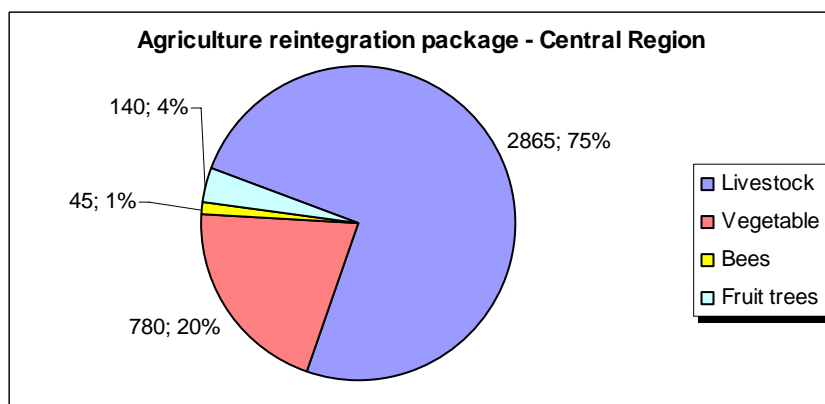


Figure 3 Agriculture reintegration Central Region⁷⁵

Source : AFS

As in the case of small businesses, some IPs tried to impose rules to limit the livestock option based on the fact that livestock can be easily sold and so it is not considered a ‘security option’ capable of keeping ex-combatants ‘busy’.⁷⁶ Attempts to impose different choices generated frustration, anger and opposition from ex-combatants, therefore the rules have not always been implemented. Independently of this, ex-combatants who opted for livestock faced several problems, ranging from confiscation by commanders, to lack of proper training in livestock management, to the extraordinarily cold winter of 2004-2005 that caused the death of much of the livestock. In the southern region, the IP’s internal evaluation reported livestock dead and/or sold due to the impossibility of ex-combatants affording the high cost of feed, and because of their wish to invest in other businesses. In the northern region, ANBP monitoring reported high percentages of livestock lost due to the IP’s deficiencies in proper planning, purchasing and delivering. In the ANBP’s report the situation of Faryab province was highlighted, where 70 per cent of the livestock delivered presented problems.

“The animals had not been properly selected when they were purchased, as they are too young to be used for animal-traction in the agriculture works, consequently they need to be fed until they can be used. For the next two years ex-combatants should invest their money without receiving any return. Many of them already died because of lack of feed”.⁷⁷

Furthermore, because villagers are frequently already competing for natural resources, such as land and water, the lack of proper planning in the distribution of large quantities of

⁷⁴ The World Bank report on poppy cultivation in 2004 stressed a decline of 23% in the land devoted to wheat compared to an expansion of 64% of the land used for poppy cultivation in the same year (Ward, B. and Byrd, W., 2004).

⁷⁵ Livestock is composed of 60% cows and 40% sheep and goats.

⁷⁶ It could be true that livestock does not keep ex-combatants ‘busy’ as in rural areas usually women and children take care of livestock. However, this corresponds to the division of roles in the households to diversify their livelihood. Thus, interfering in ex-combatants’ choices, without a previous analysis of the organisation of their household livelihoods, could have adverse consequences on the sustainability of their reintegration.

⁷⁷ SR’s meeting with ANBP’s local staff in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

livestock concentrated in small areas can contribute to generating new conflicts.⁷⁸ Analysing the poor performance in the agriculture and livestock sectors an Afghanistan New Beginnings official expressed her concerns, since these sectors are the reintegration option of 40 per cent of the ex-combatants.⁷⁹

While ‘transitional economic reintegration’ in the small businesses and agriculture sectors has been controversial, vocational training courses have been used as ex-combatants’ ‘security parking’ (as usually occurs in the DDR programmes). As mentioned earlier, vocational training courses have filled the ‘black book’ of humanitarian aid. Nevertheless lessons are never learned or applied and the Afghan experience reproduces the classic DDR failures. If vocational training aims at improving the marketable skills of trainees in order for them to achieve sustainable employment, then before setting up the training offer it is necessary to undertake an objective labour market assessment.⁸⁰ Training quality and the use of up-to-date technologies are two other indispensable conditions for preparing ex-combatants to compete in the labour market. Both the quality and quantity of vocational training offered in the Afghan DDR programme have been low, though ANBP’s figures indicated that 13,900 ex-combatants (24 per cent of the total) opted for the vocational training programme. During the monitoring of an IP’s activities, ANBP local staff found that ex-combatants were trained as car mechanics working with very old, disused car engines from Soviet times. Ex-combatants often complained about the time they were spending in useless training.⁸¹

According to an ANBP official,⁸² the numbers in vocational training, the low quality and the limited scope of training (concentrated in a few trades, see Figure 4) became sources of serious worry, as at the end of the training ex-combatants would have to compete in the market with other job seekers in an economy that still has few opportunities to offer. In some cases, such as Jalalabad, 344 ex-combatants were reported to be participating in the tailoring training courses. Due to the fact that ex-combatants came from the same villages (and same families and tribes), in some cases a concentration of about fifteen new tailors per village was being created.⁸³ Hence the lack of initial planning, feasibility studies and community participation led to unsustainable reintegration offers in the long-term. As argued by Specht,⁸⁴ the conversion of ex-combatants into one of the ‘peace-categories’ requires addressing their vulnerabilities, so as to avoid the risk of their social and economic exclusion.

⁷⁸ As reported in Dennys (2005), members of a local *shura* expressed their worry for the reintegration support received by ex-combatants living in their district. The reintegration package consisting of 216 sheep will weigh upon the natural resources of the district, chiefly the water that is not already enough for villagers’ current livestock and human usage.

⁷⁹ SR’s interview in, Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

⁸⁰ See on the subject Specht, 1998, Specht 2003, Specht 2004. A labour market assessment was carried out in 2003 by IRC, an international NGO that is not ANBP’s IP, but it was used by few IPs.

⁸¹ SR’s interview with ANBP official in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

⁸² SR’s interview in Kabul, April 2005

⁸³ ANBP official interviewed by SR in Kabul, April 2005

⁸⁴ Specht, 2003

Carpentry	17.0
Tailoring	30.0
Metal works	9.0
Auto mechanic	18.0
Embroidery	4.0
Computer courses	8.0
Motorcycle mechanic	1.0
Masonry	1.0
Radio and TV workshop	1.0
Welding	5.0
Carpet weaving	1.0
English courses	1.7
Electrician	0.2
Plumbing	2.3
Painting	0.4
Other	1.0

Figure 4: Breakdown of Vocational Training at March, 2005 ⁸⁵

Source: ANBP

Note: Total exceeds 100% due to rounding.

Few IPs appear to be implementing vocational training with a more sustainable vision of trying to improve the ex-combatants' skills in order to facilitate their participation in the labour market. World Vision in the Western region used the International Rescue Committee's labour market assessment to establish the offer of vocational training.⁸⁶ World Vision offered training mainly in skills related to the construction sector, as it is one of the growing sectors of the economy. Moreover, World Vision adopted a flexible approach, providing apprenticeship training in different fields. AGEF adopted a similar mechanism, offering different possibilities: namely an 'employment assistance package' consisting of one-year apprenticeships in an established small company, ten-month 'training on the job' in construction sites, and three months of 'qualification training' in specialised centres for computer and English courses. However, they admitted that their vocational training architecture cannot compete with the poppy harvest wage of US\$10 per day, and during the poppy harvest ex-combatants do not participate in the courses.⁸⁷ Similar difficulties have been experienced by IOM.⁸⁸ It is worth noting that IPs do not reduce the stipend paid to ex-combatants during their absence, so that ex-combatants receive double payment, one from the IP and another from their own extra job. Furthermore, the fact that ex-combatants receive a payment for participating in the training courses has led to tensions with other war-affected groups that do not have the same privilege. The IOM introduced a food support programme for internally displaced people and refugees participating in the vocational training of ex-

⁸⁵ Figures in this report seem not to be complete. For example, the percentage of computer courses seems to be very high. Usually these courses are taken by literate combatants who, most likely, were the first to be registered on the vocational training courses.

⁸⁶ SR's interview with ANBP official, Herat 22/03/05

⁸⁷ AGEF, official interviewed by SR in Kabul, 24/04/05

⁸⁸ IOM is implementing a classic vocational training based on theory and practice, and reports a constant high rate of absenteeism. During a monitoring of an IOM's vocational training centre, SR found that of 40 ex-combatants enrolled only 3 or 4 were present.

combatants as a palliative to the problem. Although this helped to mitigate the local conflict, national reconciliation, and consequently lasting peace, can be achieved only with the serious involvement of the entire population in the reintegration of all war-affected groups.

A remarkable attempt to promote local reconciliation and community participation by developing human capabilities has been Cooperation for Peace and Unity's (CPAU)⁸⁹ programme of peace education among ex-combatants and unemployed youths together. Through training in conflict management and resolution, which includes development of negotiation and communication skills, CPAU was able to involve a local commander in community activities concerned with local peace-building. This included the organisation of a local *shura* (council) of women. This shows that consensus-building mechanisms and community participation, as well as the promotion of human capital can be more effective in achieving ex-combatants' sustainable reintegration than security-oriented practices. Furthermore, CPAU's achievement assumes more relevance when contrasted with the general landscape of reintegration's experiences, which are summed up by the following statement by an ex-combatant who works only part-time in his reintegration activity:

“life was better before, my expenses were totally covered; now I have economic problems and next winter I am going to sell the equipment received. Initially we were fighting for freedom, then the factions starting fighting each other and committed violence against the population. The population hates us. I would like to be free; I do not want to depend on anybody anymore”.⁹⁰

The agent of implementation: part of the problem?

Having looked in depth at the “R” of DDR in Afghanistan, we can now argue that not all implementation problems derived from a difficult political environment. While the two “Ds” of DDR (disarmament and demobilisation) were no doubt heavily constrained by political pressures, the modality of reintegration was a matter of limited concern to militia commanders and politicians. The room for manoeuvre for ANBP and other players was therefore much bigger. Reintegration problems were therefore clearly due to the limitations of the international agencies involved and the lack of proper participation by the Afghan stakeholders, namely local and central government organisations, local communities and NGOs. Coordination mechanisms were not established or properly implemented between the international agencies involved in DDR. The lack of communication between the ANBP and UNICEF is the most dramatic example.⁹¹ UNHCR's child soldiers and ANBP's programme were run completely separately and with little or no consultation between the two agencies.⁹²

⁸⁹ SR's interview with CPAU official in Kabul March 2005. CPAU is a local Afghan NGO that is working with ex-combatants as part of a programme supported by the Japanese Centre for Conflict Prevention, independent from ANBP.

⁹⁰ SR's interview with ex-combatant in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005. The ex-combatant expressed his dissatisfaction with the DDR programme. The small business activity he opened, suggested by the IP, is a seasonal activity. He complemented the grant with his own investment, as the grant was not enough to buy the equipment. He could collect the equipment from the vendor only when he was able to cover the total price. Meanwhile he had to spend money on rent for the premises without using them.

⁹¹ In an interview with an ANBP official in Kabul, SR was told that one of the specific features of the Afghan DDR is the lack of child soldiers. It is more likely, that he did not know that UNICEF implements a child soldier DDR and that ANBP Herat was working with IOM in the elaboration of a DDR project for child soldiers.

⁹² AG's interviews with ANBP and UNHCR officials, Kunduz, October 2003-March 2004.

The case of the Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) DDR programme and the Japanese Embassy's DDR Unit is equally significant. According to a JICA official,⁹³ the relationship between the two organisations has been marked by misunderstandings and divergent opinions about programme design and implementation. Currently there is no collaboration between them. JICA has chosen to keep a very low profile in the ANBP's steering committee to avoid any contrast with the Japanese government. Was the lack of coordination a result of diverging political interests among the main players? Sources within ANBP itself acknowledged that during the planning process for Afghanistan's DDR pressure was felt from every side.⁹⁴ The lack of political will of some international players has already been mentioned, as well as the mutual mistrust among the various political stakeholders. However, several observers and practitioners also agree that problems generated by conflicting objectives and opinions at the policy level have increased due to the lack of expertise at the technical level. Two independent evaluations⁹⁵ of an IP's DDR implementation arrived at the same conclusions about the execution problems caused by expatriate staff's lack of required knowledge. Moreover, in the opinion of an Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief⁹⁶ official, the expatriates' lack of expertise, lack of interest and high turnover do not contribute to generating the necessary mutual trust between the different stakeholders of the programme. Furthermore, this has generated a vacuum of information that does not help either to analyse the process or to find solutions for its improvement.⁹⁷

The limits of reintegration translated into both political and social costs for Afghan society. Illegal taxation and abuses against the civilian population would have continued even if DDR had been a startling success, since many if not most militias were excluded from DDR because they had not been incorporated in the MoD. In any case, DDR did not even achieve the demise of the targeted militias. Even among effectively demobilised militias, rearmament was reported. UN and NGO sources variously estimated the extent of rearmament at between two and twenty per cent.⁹⁸ It is worth noting that if it is correct that 80 per cent of those demobilised were phoney combatants, according to the most pessimistic estimates rearmament could be close to 100 per cent of the real ex-combatants. Even when the original ex-combatants did not rejoin the militias, others might have taken their place, highlighting the limitations of the "targeted approach" (see introductory paragraph). For example, an ex-combatant in Mazar-i-Sharif, who had opened a small business with the support received from DDR, was asked by his former commander to rejoin the fighting. He sent his younger brother.⁹⁹

After DDR, both the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission¹⁰⁰ and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)¹⁰¹ reported an increase in the number of cases of property

⁹³ JICA official, interviewed by SR in Kabul, May 2005

⁹⁴ According to an ANBP official interviewed by SR in Kabul, April 2005.

⁹⁵ The two evaluations were the USAID's evaluation, carried out in Mazar-i-Sharif by a senior local staff member, and SR's evaluation, carried out during this field research.

⁹⁶ Interviewed in Kabul by SR, April 2005. ACBAR is a coordinator body of international NGOs and a research centre.

⁹⁷ In an interview with an ANBP official, the acting director of the reintegration component, asked about which goal is pursued by DDR between security and development, told SR that he did not have the project document and he did not know which goal is established in the project document. The vacuum of information regarding the status and effectiveness of the programme is also reported by Dennys, 2005.

⁹⁸ Dennys, 2005, from UN and NGO sources: rate of rearmament p. 7.

⁹⁹ IOM official, interviewed by SR in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

¹⁰⁰ SR's interview with AIHRC official in Kabul, April 2005.

¹⁰¹ SR's interview with NRC official in Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

confiscation and/or destruction by commanders and warlords and illegal detentions by the police. The AIHRC reported that the number of cases of land confiscation in the first months of this year was 36 per cent of the total human rights violations as compared to 18 per cent during the same period of last year; and that in 2004, 11 per cent of the total number of violations of human rights were related to the use of torture by the police. NRC reports that of the 370 cases of land disputes submitted to them, 80 per cent are commander-related. UNHCR's figures¹⁰² in the North showed that illegal taxation of the population by local militias continued (see Figure 5), and reported that local commanders had appeared to be involved in new activities, associated with the abuse of local population and, more likely, the manipulation of international aid.

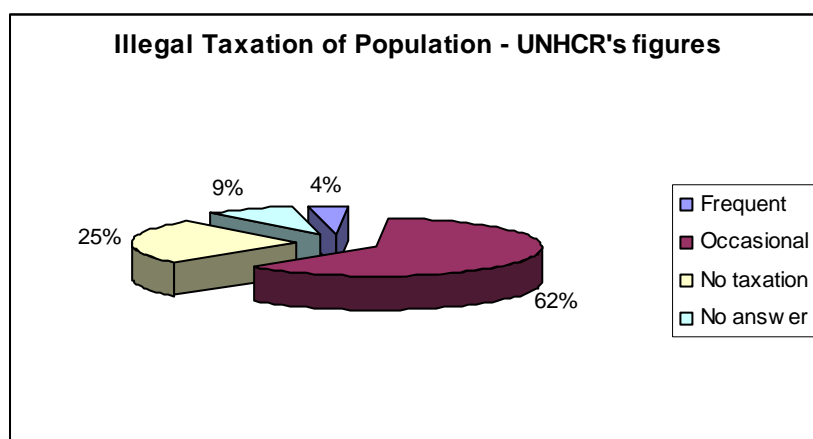


Figure 5: Illegal Taxation of population

Source: UNHCR data

As criticism of ANBP mounted during 2003-2004, the main remaining selling point was that at least it would have delegitimised the militias by abolishing their legal status.¹⁰³ While this was true as far as the central government was concerned, in rural communities little seems to have changed. As found in about forty villages visited by UNHCR, militia commanders - even after DDR - maintained the role that used to belong to notables, that of conscripting villagers for social works, such as cleaning streets, digging channels, etcetera. In some villages the population was forced to pay the salary of the workers and each family was taxed from 20 to 200 afghani. Without an effective reintegration programme to dissolve the link between commanders and militiamen, the survival of the militias was no surprise. Of course, these situations were the result not only of the poor reintegration process of ex-combatants, but also of the law and power vacuum existing in the country.¹⁰⁴ The ultimate demonstration that commanders and warlords retained their power and influence despite DDR came with the parliamentary elections of 18 September 2005, when at least 90 out of the 249 elected were militia commanders or their close associates.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² SR's interview with UNCHR official, Mazar-i-Sharif, April 2005.

¹⁰³ AG's interview with ANBP official, Mazar-i Sharif, June 2004.

¹⁰⁴ SR's interview with AIHRC, *cit.*

¹⁰⁵ Carlotta Gall, 'Islamists and Mujahedeen Secure Victory in Afghan Vote', *New York Times*, 23 October 2005; AG's interviews with diplomats and UN officials, Kabul, October 2005.

It might be argued that even if reintegration in Afghanistan fell far short of a success, it was still better than if no reintegration had taken place at all and that the US\$150 million committed to the programme are very little by international standards. However, DDR represented much more than a hope in the eyes of many Afghans, and its failure to even get close to expectations is likely to have cost the international community much credibility among Afghans.

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