Militarized youths in western Côte d’Ivoire: local processes of mobilization, demobilization, and related humanitarian interventions (2002-2007)

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Return to civilian life for militarized populations:
Two standard humanitarian instruments under the lens

Since borders between military, civilian and humanitarian spheres have become increasingly blurred, especially as situations of ‘no war, no peace’ tend to linger, the conceptualization of reintegration processes would undoubtedly gain if it were no longer presented as a drastic change, ‘post’ military. Reintegration has much to do with the way local communities construct memories of violence (Pouligny, 2004b: 11) and this process takes a particular turn when recruits stay close to their place of residence, as has partly been the case in western Côte d’Ivoire. Because it is through a social group that reintegration processes take place, militarized civilians who leave the military cannot therefore be conceived as isolated from the society they are (re)entering: social networks and immediate surroundings play a key role in these social processes.

If reintegration is driven foremost by internal processes, post-conflict interventions nonetheless also attempt to facilitate the return to civilian life of militarized populations, and have engaged in such programming for about a decade. If there are proponents and opponents of such types of intervention, reintegration programming has become so much part of any environment affected by warfare that
it has become an unavoidable actor in any given system, regardless of one’s opinion of the relevance of the intervention. This section therefore explores the extent to which (re)socialization processes have been externally driven in western Côte d’Ivoire from the particular points of view of recruits who have received external help in the process. What have been the various stakes in favour of participation? To what extent have processes driven by planned interventions responded to recruits’ individual expectations? Respondents’ accounts when describing the resumption of their daily routine and the reactivation of their past social relationships are particularly telling when exploring these questions.

In this chapter, I first clarify the main debates related to reinsertion and reintegration before pointing out the specificities of the Ivorian case. I then focus on two standard reinsertion instruments widely used in post-conflict politics to help ‘resocialize’ young people temporarily drawn into armed groups: the supply of financial safety nets, and the provision of short-term vocational training. For the latter, I draw on observations made when studying a pilot project executed by a German agency (GTZ-IS), which targeted low-ranking demobilized militia members and rebels still active in the rebellion. The project offered them a short education in a specific craft (tailoring, welding, mechanics, agriculture/husbandry, or small business management) and provided them with basic starting equipment. Regarding the financial safety nets, given that the recruits I interviewed put the cash allowance they received to several uses, it is worth exploring the extent to which such a form of financial compensation has helped them to secure social acceptance, especially in light of the fact that they received it several months (and sometimes even years) after their practical demobilization.

The global approach to reinsertion and reintegration

A conflict resolution pack

Conflict prevention and peace-building processes are largely based on the idea that positive change can be induced by targeted interventions, and it is expected that the propensity for recruits to resume fighting can be diminished if sound interventions are implemented step by step, according to some kind of checklist. Donors and humanitarian practitioners talk in terms of programme objectives, outcome indicators, accomplishments, number of beneficiaries, and a twelve-month reintegration programme for ex-combatants is genuinely considered enough to prevent recruits from re-enrolling. This conception largely overestimates the impact of planned interventions by ignoring the fact that interventions are always reshaped by contextual dynamics and that they rarely go as planned. By taking place in a social arena, they interact with different stake-
holders and are constantly being reshaped according to the changing balance of power at the local level (Long, 2001).

DDR programmes are no exception. Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration are all planned processes which look very good on paper, but which rarely go as planned. They have nonetheless become standard interventions to secure peace in the aftermath of war and they usually pave the way for international initiatives in the domains of development and reconstruction. If DDR processes are in general widely accepted by donors, multilateral agencies, and parties involved in a conflict – Muggah refers to them as ‘a part of the emergent post-conflict orthodoxy’ (Muggah, 2005) – they are not free of shortcomings, and several scholars have in fact called to critically reflect on these processes, if only to help them to realize their full potential. I clarify the acronyms below, and then I present the main debates related to reinsertion and reintegration processes.

Clarifying the terms

Demobilization is the planned process by which armed forces downsize or completely disband. It implies the reduction in size of the official army, paramilitary forces, and rebel groups.¹ In practice, it involves the gathering, disarmament, administration, counseling, skills assessment and discharge of former combatants, with a compensation package usually including financial ‘safety nets’ and reintegration support (DPKO, 2000; ISS, 2008). Disarmament is the central objective of demobilization and consists of the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons from anyone involved in armed groups. It formally marks the change of status from combatants to ex-combatants (DPKO, 2000; Swarbrick, 2007). Perhaps even more importantly, it fulfils a strategic symbolic function by signaling the commitment of all parties to the peace process. It is often used as a ‘confidence-building’ tool and it is genuinely believed that it has the potential to increase stability in very tense and uncertain environments (Willibald, 2006).

In DDR programming, Reintegration is conceptualized as the complex economic, political, social and psychological process by which former militarized people make the transition from military to civilian life (ISS, 2008; Knight & Özerdem, 2004). It is conceived as a long-term process since it is assumed that it takes several years for former recruits and for their families to adapt to their new situation. It encompasses several dimensions, usually defined as followed: economic reintegration is understood as the process through which demobilized

¹ Depending on the context-specific security sector reform, part of the paramilitary forces and the rebel recruits are (or not) integrated into the regular army once it is restructured (Bryden et al., 2005).
soldiers achieve financial independence by securing a stable livelihood for themselves and their dependents; political reintegration is the process through which they engage in community-based structures and in local processes of consultation and decision-making; social reintegration is the process through which they (re)-consider themselves to be part of the community with whom they relate to; and psychological reintegration is the process by which they adjust from a military lifestyle (generally characterized by a strict hierarchical system of command and a high exposure to violence) to civilian life (usually less dangerous and much more flexible). Reintegration support can take the form of cash payments, food donation, access to credit schemes, counseling, job placement, vocational training and small equipment. Reinsertion differs from reintegration in the sense that it refers to the immediate post-demobilization period. It is generally also accompanied by a small package which aims at providing interim support before the longer term process of reintegration commences (Willibald, 2006). In practice, the two terms are often used interchangeably, which adds to the confusion by sending mixed messages to target groups with respect to what assistance to expect.

A few scholars have argued that donors are not really serious about funding the developmental component of DDR and tend to forget long-term reintegration processes very quickly (Pouligny, 2004b). When (some) funding is secured for the R component of DDR, it is usually for reinsertion, not reintegration. The general focus mainly remains quantitative and focused on the DD phases (generally perceived as the most urgent to address). Targets are measurable in terms of number of guns returned, number of recruits demobilized and number of recruits relocated. Less tangible pointers, such as the degree of social acceptance and the degree of general wellbeing, lag far behind, regardless of their social importance.

It is worth noting that DDR programmes do not necessarily have to start with the DD components. Even if the acronym suggests that the procedural order is first Disarmament, then Demobilization and then Reinsertion (and eventually Reintegration if funding allows), the sequence of the different phases of DDR processes does not need to be in line with the acronym (Pouligny, 2004b: 5; Specker, 2008a). Disarmament can also take place during or after demobilization, and can even be separate from the demobilization process; for instance, when armed civilians turn in their weapons. Combatants may also only want to disarm and dismantle their groups once they have gradually resumed civilian life. A variety of ‘D’ and ‘R’ combinations has therefore been used in practice, according to funding availability and the preferences of individual agencies. While

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2 Spreading the recruits tends to give the impression that it disperses their military chain of command, hence that it prevents them from getting re-enrolled.
Pouligny recognizes the inherent advantage of this system – which allows for maximum flexibility in operational planning – she also underlines its major inconvenience: it creates confusion, and by adopting competing and often contradictory definitions of what DDR means, it creates discrepancies between the different stakeholders’ expectations and possibilities. Sharing the same viewpoint, Specker (2008a: 14) also underlines the fact that activities within the R phase itself are not always well sequenced, which results in operational delays. There is, for instance, often no clear vision as to how the various activities should follow one another: after the short-term vocational training comes to an end, for instance, there are frequently no jobs or not sufficient equipment available to ex-combatants.

Reinsertion and reintegration in debate

There are several practical debates associated with external processes of reinsertion and reintegration. Should cash be given to militarized populations to help them make the transition from soldiering to civilian life? Should specific programmes be created for them, regardless of potential risks of stigmatization? Who should be in them, who should be left out? And given the unpredictability of securing stable funding in the long run, to what extent is the reinsertion/reintegration distinction still relevant to make in operational programming (Specker, 2008b)? There are many practical difficulties in following up demilitarized recruits in the long run: African youths, including those who had joined an armed group, frequently move between towns, villages and regions, and their hyper-mobility makes them difficult to trace. Another difficulty is due to the length of most reinsertion/reintegration programmes: with any project lasting more than six months considered long-term, there is a clear lack of perspective and a serious need for longitudinal studies that explore the changing lifestyle of former recruits over a long period of time.

- The use of cash in safety nets

Most DDR processes include cash transfers to militarized civilians in at least one of their phases. What lies behind this practice is the assumption that giving money to ex-combatants directly can have a positive effect on their lives. While this runs against the conventional view of aid that favours in-kind assistance over financial help, the relevance of using cash is being reconsidered in development circles and has received growing support. A certain line of thinking argues that it is in fact quite efficient to give money directly to the ones in need (Hanlon, 2004; Willibald, 2006). Still, the use of cash in development response remains confined to a few niches, and donors and practitioners are still reluctant to use it on a large scale. Interestingly, it has become increasingly widespread in DDR processes,
despite the many acknowledged shortcomings. Cash incentives are used in the disarmament stage to ‘buy back’ weapons and reduce the number of guns and ammunition in circulation. It is also sometimes used in the reinsertion/reintegration stage to facilitate ex-combatants’ return to civilian life (Knight & Ozerdem, 2004; Muggah, 2005). I focus below on cash incentives used in the reinsertion/reintegration stage.

There are several pros and cons to using cash at this stage in the DDR process. At one extreme, it is believed that financial support can have a positive effect on former recruits by facilitating their transition between war and post-war life, namely by providing them with the necessary means to meet the immediate challenges they face. At the other extreme, another interpretation is that rewarding the fighters with financial incentives might have the possible effect of fostering re-enrolment, should the situation deteriorate once again in the same area. By drawing on a variety of case studies, Willibald (2006) has identified various benefits and risks for using cash in development response. In terms of benefits, he mentions: the advantage of adapting very well to the specific needs of the individual; the benefit of preserving individual’s dignity and freedom of choice; cost efficiency (understood as lower transaction and logistical costs associated with programme implementation); beneficial knock-on effects on local markets and trade; and a way to sidestep the problem of commodity aid being sold. Specifically regarding DDR, he stresses that the provision of cash incentives encourages former combatants to return their weapons and to return to their communities relatively quickly, thereby diffusing political unrest as former recruits disperse. He also points out that it curbs dependencies on informal support structures by alleviating the burden on communities and households (those would otherwise be adversely affected by the return of ex-combatants). In terms of shortcomings, he mentions the higher risk that the money be used ‘unwisely’ (on alcohol, drugs, weapons), especially when the recipient has limited financial management skills. He also acknowledges that it creates more exposure to robberies and targeted assaults (of both beneficiaries and programme staff), and he points out the difficulty of selecting recipients, since extra cash is usually needed by most of the war-affected population. With specific regard to DDR, he and other scholars (Junne & Verkoren, 2005: 312) recognizes that cash incentives could potentially fuel an illegal arms market by expanding cross-border movements, could potentially incite recruits to take up arms again if expectations are not met, and could eventually disconnect ex-combatants from the communities they relate to, should they be given disproportionate financial compensation. I will come back to these pros and cons when discussing empirical findings.
• Specific programming and entry criteria

Donors’ representatives in the field and practitioners are increasingly skeptical about creating specific programmes for ex-combatants in protracted situations (personal communication, June 2007). This observation is shared by several scholars who instead advocate broadening the current programmatic frameworks (Saferworld, 2008). When situations of ‘no war, no peace’ prevail in areas struck by structural poverty, it is in fact quite difficult to target the right individuals and to ensure a fair allocation of assistance: everyone seems to be in need. One of the main rationales brought forward in support of this argument is that communities might become resentful of ex-combatants if they receive (perceived) disproportionate support from their participation in assistance programmes (i.e. if the programme privileges them too much in comparison with the local standards). The Liberian and Sierra Leonean experiences have both confirmed that non-militarized civilians grow frustrated when they do not receive any compensation for their suffering, and that such a situation can create tensions. In Sierra Leone, ex-combatants who received humanitarian support eventually were perceived as a privileged group by their immediate environment, and instead of decreasing tensions, these escalated between demobilized recruits and the population in several locations. Cash payments and in-kind donations are often locally perceived to be rewards, some sort of financial compensation for the war effort, which at the local level conveys the ambiguous message that crime pays; in such a perspective, (re)enrolling, should hostilities resume, could be a possible threat, driven by lucrative prospects. Several studies have nonetheless indicated that community resentment is likely to fade away with time, when the community realizes that it indirectly benefits from the return of these youths. The testimony of this demobilized recruit is particularly telling: ‘Community members did not like the fact that we got money but did not mind taking our cash’ (Tesfamichael et al., 2004 cited in (Willibald, 2006). In an impoverished area, any infusion of extra cash eventually ends up stimulating the local economy, generating collateral profits for others.

Another rationale brought forward with regard to avoiding creating specific reintegration programmes for ex-combatants is that it could open the door to many abuses. Such interventions de facto inherit from existing patron-client relationships upon which they have little control, and there is the risk that beneficiaries themselves attempt to bluff the system using influential social networks to get on the list of beneficiaries, regardless of their participation in warfare. In western Côte d’Ivoire, after all, militia and rebel leaders had much more say than humanitarian staff in selecting the recruits to include in the reinsertion projects.

If scepticism increases in development circles over the relevance of creating specific programmes for ex-combatants, the alternative approach, which consists
of targeting the war-affected community at large, is not often applied in practice. Specific programmes remain the norm, despite their inherent stigma and acknowledged shortcomings. Who is included? Who is left out? What are the entry criteria? Girls and women are curiously invisible in most DDR processes, and children and adolescents recruits are usually entitled to special treatment. Very few donors are also prepared to pay for reinserting war chiefs, since they usually receive quite bad press according to international standards. The question arises then whether a military unit can be effectively dismantled without dealing at all with its hierarchy. As Pouligny pointed out, what in that case guarantees the break in the chain of command (Pouligny, 2004b)? An additional difficulty emerges when attempting to sort out militarized recruits from civilians. The distinction is rarely clear-cut. Some recruits consider themselves mobilized for a limited period of time only, in contrast to others who continue to assert their belonging to an armed group several years after the end of combat. Some expressly fall into the category ‘combatant’ while others never fought and always held a position in the rear. The way the National DDR Plan is drafted has a direct influence on individuals’ eligibility for support: it determines who is entitled to benefit and who is not. But even then, determining status is not easy: the Ivoirian DDR plan used such a wide definition for ex-combatant that it eventually included far too many people to reasonably cope with.

DDR in Côte d’Ivoire

Dismantlement of militias: a series of false starts

If the disarmament of the main belligerent parties never started on a massive scale and resembled a political yoyo (see Chapter 4 for more details on the planned process), the dismantlement of pro-government militias partially occurred, although not without difficulties. There were a series of false starts. The beginning of the process was announced several times and actually started three times in Guiglo: on 25 May 2005, on 26 July 2006, and on 19 May 2007. The first year, there was no eagerness to disarm. FANCI Chief of Staff General Mangou organized a ceremony in Guiglo in the presence of the four main militia leaders (FLGO, AP-We, UPRGO and MILOCI) to mark the start of the dismantlement of militias; local authorities, dignitaries and UN representatives were also represented (OCHA, 2005). During the event, militia leaders expressed their commit-

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3 When applied (at the time of doing fieldwork), it was usually an extension of a specific programme. For instance, while the first reinsertion project of GTZ-IS targeted demobilized militiamen and young rebels still active in the rebellion, the follow-up projects enlarged the target and included groups labeled ‘at risk’, which included participants who had not necessarily been involved in armed groups.

4 For more information on the youngest recruits in the Ivoirian conflict, see Chelpi-Den Hamer (2010).
ment to restoring peace. They reiterated their willingness to be included in the DDR process, and, as a symbol of their commitment, they handed over a symbolic weapon. At the ceremony, the PNDDR representative announced that western militias would be taken into account in DDR programming, but he did not specify what they would be entitled to in terms of a reinsertion package. Six days after the 25 May 2005 ceremony, the dismantlement of militias was no longer an option. Forty-one people had been killed in the villages of Guitrozon and Petit Duékoué, sixty-one had been wounded, all of Guéré origin, and both belligerent sides were accusing the other of having plotted the massacres.

On 27 July 2006, in line with the Pretoria Agreement and following the resumption of the DDR talks between the regular troops, 150 pro-government militia members surrendered their weapons in Guiglo in presence of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny and PNDDR and UN representatives (OCHA, 2006). They were the first to do so, out of an ever-changing estimated target of 2,000 militia members. They received the financial safety net agreed in the national plan, which was disbursed as follows. A first instalment was given upon disarmament (125,000 CFA francs) and represented a fourth of their total entitlement. The rest was supposed to be paid later, in two instalments, respectively one and two months after their official demobilization. The second payment was made relatively on time, but the third payment was eventually delayed a month for a variety of reasons. Between 27 July and 3 August 2006, 981 militia members eventually underwent the same demobilization process, and 108 weapons and 6,975 pieces of ammunition were handed over to the impartial forces, including some automatic weapons and a cannon (ONUCI, September 2006). But most of the arms were defective, and the ratio of combatant per surrendered weapon/ammo was so ridiculous that the DDR division of the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (ONUCI) recommended suspending the operation. The dismantlement of militias therefore ground to a halt on 4 August 2006 (OCHA, 2006; UN chronology, 2008).

The third false start in the militia dismantlement was on 19 May 2007, when the Ivorian Presidency initiated a media-conscious operation in Guiglo, during which 1,026 weapons were handed over (government estimate) against consequent payment to the main militia leaders (estimated at 280 million CFA francs). The ONUCI revised the number of weapons down (to 500) and pointed out that a third were dysfunctional (personal communication, November 2007). Interesting-

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5 125,000 CFA francs are equivalent to EUR 190.
6 The total amount of the package amounted to 499,500 CFA francs (USD 940 or EUR 760).
7 Transport expenses were promised to be paid separately (personal communications with demobilized recruits, April 2007).
8 280 million CFA francs are equivalent to EUR 427,000.
ly, this initiative was launched outside the National DDR Plan, and neither the National Commission for DDR (CNDDDR) or the ONUCI were associated with the event. After that day, one of the President’s advisors unilaterally declared the end of the militia dismantlement (ICG, 2007). Although a presidential envelope was supposed to be dispatched to militia members, the process was so opaque that militia leaders were accused of keeping the money for themselves and of favoring their relatives, which generated some tension. When I was on fieldwork in June 2007, a lot of militia members recruited in Blolequin had in fact left town to travel to Abidjan in order to claim a share.

**Particularities of the Ivoirian case**

In addition to the general debates associated with disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration (Should cash be given to combatants? Should specific programmes be created for them? How to determine entry criteria?), there are a number of particularities to take into account in the Ivoirian case, necessary to better comprehend the situation there. Firstly, the Ivoirian PCO uses a broad definition of militarized people and does not limit it to those solely in possession of a weapon. It clearly states that anyone who has joined an armed group and who has acted in support of military operations is considered a ‘combatant’, and thus is eligible for entry into the official DDR programme: ‘Leur qualité de combattant procède de leur appartenance à un groupe armé’ (PCO, 2004). A second particularity is the unreliability of the figures (Unowa, 2005). For obvious strategic reasons, the number of recruits and equipment has remained unclear on both belligerent sides, and to date, PNDDR and ONUCI representatives have not yet received the lists of combatants and weapons, which raises several issues in terms of planning. Thirdly, there is the need to acknowledge the brevity of the conflict, in sharp contrast with what happened in the neighbouring countries. The Ivoirian conflict did not last long, nor the violence related to the war, yet as mentioned in the contextual chapters, it left quite a cultural mark, especially in areas close to the front line.

An interesting peculiarity of the Ivoirian case is that on both sides, most recruits had de facto disarmed without undergoing the official DDR process. In 2007 on the rebel side, most respondents stated that they had not carried arms for several years. The bulk of the weapons had been collected by their leaders when the military situation stabilized and had been gathered in arsenals, ready for a potential redistribution if the situation evolved in such a direction. On the counter-insurgent side, right before the dismantlement wave of the 981 militia members in the summer of 2006, weapons were collected in advance from combatants in towns and villages by militia leaders, and then were surrendered in batch to the ONUCI, under CNDDDR supervision. Such a modus operandi actu-
ally raised a certain number of issues, as not all recruits who had given back arms appeared on the list for inclusion in the official demobilization programme. Militia leaders were therefore accused of favouring relatives. Outside Guiglo in particular, militarized civilians expressed their frustration more than once with respect to their lack of reward.

The fact that most rebel and militia recruits were in fact disarmed several years ago revisits a common assumption in literature on DDR, one that states that combatants only agree to surrender the physical and economic security their weapons provide if they see alternative livelihood prospects in what reinsertion programmes offer (Knight & Ozerdem, 2004; Willibald, 2006). If most low-ranked recruits surrender their weapons to their commanders way before the start of the official disarmament, this claim is no longer valid, and some contexts similar to our case might confirm the fact that recruits in non-State armed groups do not necessarily use the threat of a gun for private economic gain.

An interesting feature probably not confined to the Ivorian case is the multiplicity of reinsertion initiatives that have run in parallel to the National DDR Plan. We mentioned one before, in May 2007, when the Ivorian Presidency initiated militia dismantlement in Guiglo and gave cash payments to militia leaders to dispatch to their troops. The initiative was launched outside the National DDR Plan and did not involve the key DDR actors CNDDR and ONUCI. Another parallel initiative focusing on the reinsertion of ex-combatants is the pilot project undertaken by the German agency GTZ-IS that is described in detail below. It initially targeted 500 of the 981 militia members demobilized in 2006 who were allocated financial compensation, and 500 FAFN elements still active in the rebellion who had not yet received any reinsertion support. Another initiative that can be documented is the ONUCI USD 4 million reintegration programme for ex-combatants and youths at risk, launched in August 2008 with wide media coverage, and planning to foster the creation of 1,000 micro-projects (the programme was initially designed to last six months and the amount of individual support ranged between 300 and 420,000 CFA francs) (ONUCI, 2008). In November 2008, the UNDP publicly announced its support for the reinsertion of 700 ex-combatants in Katiola and Bouaké. Other initiatives included UNDP and UNICEF, which secured specific funding to support the reintegration of children and women associated with armed forces. The international NGOs Save the Children and International Rescue Committee were also developing specific programmes with respect to children associated with armed forces, and the Nor-

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9 Children associated with armed group or forces were handled separately. They usually went through an orientation and transit center (CTO) under the direct supervision of NGOs and the overall management of UNICEF. They were not entitled to the safety net package.
wegian Refugee Council succeeded in securing funding for offering training and economic opportunities to youths at risk in the militia stronghold of Duékoué. Although, theoretically, most of these initiatives occurred in partnership with the National Programme of Reinserion and Community Rehabilitation (PNRRC), it has been difficult for this institution to coordinate all this in practice. This raised additional issues and added to the confusion by sending mixed messages. When the official DDR process starts (if ever), what will be the approach to recruits who have already benefited from an alternative type of support? Would they be included in the official programme? And given the fact that each alternative programme delivers a different package and keeps its own records, to what extent is it possible to assess the impact of such ‘extras’ on participants’ lives? Can recruits easily navigate between the different schemes?

The next two sections focus on how young people temporarily drawn into armed groups made use of two standard reinsertion instruments widely used in post-conflict politics as ‘re-socialization’ tools: financial safety nets, and short-term vocational training. I first look at how respondents made use of their financial safety net and the extent to which it helped them to secure social acceptance, especially since the cash instalments were given several months after their effective demobilization. I then specifically focus on a pilot project undertaken by the German agency GTZ-IS, by examining the pros and cons of taking part in such an intervention from the particular points of view of youths who participated in the project. What were the economic and social stakes in favour of participation? How have they made use of the reinsertion prospects the programme offered? And how have they integrated it (or not) with other opportunities that arose at the same time?

Reinsertion under the lens: how were cash allowances spent?

Genuine belief that recruits had earned the right to compensation was a recurring litany throughout interviews. ‘We lost five years of our time.’ ‘We’ve been delayed.’ There was something intrinsic to these statements, namely, the expression of a certain conception of fairness and the implicit claim that financial compensation was due, regardless of the outcome of conflict. The majority of recruits, rebels and militia members alike, emphasized the fact that despite having been called to fight for their country, they had gained little from it, and they had mainly lost their time in the movement instead of being able to work elsewhere. They therefore were entitled to a proper reward for their services rendered. If

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10 The PNRCC was founded by the APO in March 2007 and replaced the former structure of PNDDR/RC.
some threatened to return to violence if not satisfied, the particular fact that most recruits had already been disarmed in 2006-2007 make foremost these claims rhetorical, without being mistaken too much.

While most low-ranked recruits saw financial compensation as a back-payment for their services, military leaders, and especially the high-ranking ones, had a different perspective; once the right to compensation was institutionalized in the National DDR Plan, they used it as a carrot to retain their troops. The prospect of no financial reward would probably have led many recruits to abandon the ranks after a certain time, especially among the western militias who were in this respect much freer than their rebel counterparts. But the prospect of being on the official demobilization list and of potentially receiving DDR money had the reverse effect of building recruits’ loyalty. This was especially expressed on the rebel side, as no recruit had yet received any form of financial compensation.

This section examines how the financial incentive distributed in the summer of 2006 to the 981 militia members was spent. It was dispatched in three instalments: the first one was supplied on July 2006 (125,000 CFA francs), the second on 13 September 2006 (125,000 CFA francs), and the third one at the end of November of the same year (249,500 CFA francs). The analysis is based on a careful examination of 100 testimonies.

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**Box 9.1: Three examples of the use of financial incentives**

‘The first instalment I shared with my family and my in-laws. I kept a little, but not much. Most of the money was used to pay miscellaneous expenses. The second instalment, I gave 50,000 to my wife for her small business. I also set up a cabine for my little brother but he screwed everything up. I used the last instalment to invest in my own business, a maquis and to improve my home.’

‘I gave money to my family and I paid for my uncle’s medical expenses. I also gave petty cash to acquaintances I have in the militia group who are not yet demobilized. I bought a plot of land in Guiglo, near the timber industry for 50,000 CFA francs. I am currently building a house. I also purchased wood from the timber company, to make charcoal. I opened a CCP account at the local post.’

‘I improved my home. I set up a water tap for 58,000 CFA francs and I purchased an electricity counter at 72,000 CFA francs. I helped my brother to start his own hevea field and I gave him 125,000 CFA francs. I also gave petty cash to my family.’

Source: Fieldwork (interview fragments from discussions with A., M. and G., spring 2007)

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11 Initially planned on 29 October 2006, it was delayed a month.
Juggling between social obligations and personal benefit

Drawing on interview fragments and informal discussions with demobilized militia elements, findings show that respondents used their safety net very differently, constantly juggling between social obligations and personal benefit (Chelpi-Den Hamer, 2009). I come up below with a rough categorization of expenses.

• Reimbursing creditors

Reimbursing creditors was not an uncommon answer and many respondents said that upon reception of the cash, they paid the debts they accumulated during the war period. One respondent had accumulated as much as 325,000 CFA francs in debt since the beginning of the war. He had not paid his house rent for several months, which put him 25,000 CFA francs in debt every month, not to mention the unpaid utilities bills (electricity/water). For him it was important to pay his creditors first, otherwise he feared they would have gone to the police to file a formal complaint when they found out that he had received some cash. Another respondent explained that even if he had slept most of the war in military camps, he had to keep renting a home in town for his wife. Several militiamen also mentioned that they had bought food on credit during the war. They could usually eat at the camp but their dependents were not entitled to free food. One respondent had contracted a loan to bury his mother. She had remained in the mortuary for a month (billed 5,000 CFA francs a day) and he had to borrow for the cost of the coffin (50,000 CFA francs) and to pay for the stay of relatives who had come to attend the funeral. He used his cash allowance to clear this debt.

• Responding to familial demands

The relationships respondents have with their family after receiving their cash entitlement are quite complex and range from strategies of avoidance to strategies of resignation. How to best manage the burden, seems to be the standard strategy. Several respondents’ remarks illustrate the difficulties in avoiding relatives: ‘People know when you get your cash. The following morning, you see all your relatives in a row in front of your door and you have to give them something. You give 5,000 to your aunt, 5,000 to your cousin, 5,000 to your other cousin, etc.’ One respondent bypassed the issue by putting all his cash in the local bank and returning empty-handed to his village. Even when cornered, he was practically incapable of giving cash to anyone.

A few respondents mentioned having loaned money to a sibling (up to 100,000 CFA francs). While most loans were not yet repaid at the time of the interviews, some had already been bitterly abused. One respondent mentioned he had given his complete first instalment to his family, ‘to be left in peace’. He used to be employed as a katakata driver before the war, and he wanted to save
the rest to buy a **katakata**. **Katakatas** are a sort of bush tractors that transport all kinds of merchandise. Given the second-hand cost of such vehicle (about 1.5 million CFA francs), one of his brothers convinced him to entrust him with his second and third instalments. The plan was to travel to Abidjan to ask their eldest brother to participate in the purchase by paying the remaining million. The entrusted brother eventually usurped all the money, claiming that he had been robbed on the way.

Regardless of these cases of abuse, a recurring argument in favour of family support is gratefulness. Close to the front line, villages often played an important role in supplying food to combatants and complex mechanisms of money collection occurred between armed groups, villagers, and the educated elite in Abidjan native to these war-affected areas. One interview fragment summarizes it well: ‘You have to be grateful and reward those who fed you during the war.’ Several respondents therefore felt obliged to reward their benefactors, and these included close relatives who participated in the war effort and who supported them during difficult times. Rewards to the spouse and to direct parents (father/mother) were rather standard patterns, and I heard several stories of respondents setting up a farm for their father, or helping their wife develop her own business.

- **Investing**

Several respondents mentioned that it was not until the last instalment that they could do something productive with their money. Some invested in wood and bought loads from the nearby Thanry timber industry to make into charcoal. Others entered the growing sector of hevea cultivation or expanded the plantation they already had (this sector was especially in vogue at the time I was doing fieldwork). Respondents who were already engaged in cultivating hevea before the war usually bought new plants from the CHC (**Compagnie Hévéicole du Cavally**), an international rubber company located in the area (to give a rough cost estimate, there are about 600 plants on one hectare, and one plant costs about 250 CFA francs). Those new to the activity purchased land, cleared their field and/or joined the myriad of private and humanitarian projects that were then offering incentives to cultivate hevea in the Moyen-Cavally region.

One respondent used his last instalment to purchase one hectare of hevea for the rubber industry for 180,000 CFA francs.¹² He had used the previous two transfers to give petty cash to his relatives (wife, brothers and sister), pay for his son’s school boarding expenses (35,000 CFA francs), buy food (three bags of

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¹² Access to land must not be considered a given for the *autochtones*. Some indeed mentioned that they could rely on their father’s forest to start their own plantation, but others said they had to buy a piece of land.
rice at 36,000 CFA francs) and to purchase agricultural equipment (a pulverizer at 48,500 CFA francs). Another respondent used his third transfer to enter a local project, the *Nouvelles Plantations Hévéicoles de l’ouest Montagneux de la Côte d’Ivoire*, to benefit from free seedlings. When we met, he had just started contracting workers to clear two hectares of forest to start a hevea plantation.

Respondents did not solely invest in agricultural activities. One used his safety net to purchase a sewing machine, a *Singer-à-tête-noire* (75,000 CFA francs). He was planning to return to tailoring, an activity he was doing before the war, and to run his own workshop. Another waited for the third instalment to restock his shop with 200,000 CFA francs worth of new merchandise. Another invested in a chicken farm. He bought poultry, food, vaccines, and resumed his pre-war activity. Another used most of his safety net to start a *maquis*. He spent 300,000 CFA francs to purchase a freezer, several chairs, a few tables, the first stock of drinks, and to cover the various costs related to the installation (restoration, rent and a security deposit). Other types of investments included partial payment to an auto school (in the prospect of getting a driving licence to be able to work as a taxi/truck/minivan driver), paying city fees (for setting up a market stall or a small business), paying intermediaries to find a job, paying registration fees for being authorized to take national civil service exams, and the payment of bribes and fees to be allowed to take the 9th and 12th grade exams (in the hope that this would open more doors).

**Using unwisely?**

Although I am not at ease with the term, there are a range of uses that could be labeled ‘unwise’ or ‘unproductive’ from a Western perspective: improving one’s home, buying a plot of land (when not for agricultural purposes), purchasing basic furniture, clothes, marrying, rewarding old men who provided mystic protection during the war (*gris-gris*), etc. If buying a bed and a mattress perhaps raises few eyebrows, purchasing a TV/VCR, building a house or spending important sums on marriage could be more contentious; yet locally, they send quite important signals. Noteworthily, a certain number of respondents took advantage of their financial safety net to leave the family home and to settle independently: ‘Before the war, I used to sleep at my parents. With the net, I detached myself. I built a 2-chambres-salon.’13 One respondent used his second instalment to have his identity papers drawn up. In a country where the lack of documentation often impedes free circulation, this is far from being unproductive. Many respondents also mentioned having spent substantial sums on medical expenses right after

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13 This means a small house with two bedrooms and a living-room.
receipt of their cash entitlement, either for themselves or for close relatives. Usually, such use was a major expense and there was nothing left. But it is difficult to label such types of expenses unproductive. Respondents preferred the term ‘bad timing’ when a serious disease hit them (or their family).

Perhaps the best statement to illustrate how most respondents felt upon receipt of their safety net is the following interview extract: ‘When you are not paid for years, you live one day after the other. This cash we got, we could do nothing good with it.’ That partly explains why a lot of respondents spent their money quickly and to relatively insignificant personal benefit. Many respondents were also not happy with the fact that the safety net came in three instalments. They would have preferred to receive everything in one go, as smaller cash amounts are easily wasted, in particular by responding to familial demands; however, such a flexible view runs against the preferred international approach that favours payment by instalment (Knight & Ozerdem, 2004).

• Allocating money to war chiefs: racket or reward?
Allocating part of the financial safety net to war chiefs is a common feature, which raises the question of the extent to which it should be interpreted as racket or reward. If we look at interview fragments, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that extortion was real. One account is particularly enlightening: ‘It was serious in Duékoué. You were obliged to give. If you did not give, you could not get out. The first time, my leader took 30,000 out of my instalment as recognition payment. The next two times, he did not get anything. As I was walking out of the compound with the cash in my pockets, he asked me, but I lied to him. I told him that I was still expecting my money and that I just wanted to get out for a drink.’ Retaliation rarely follows such avoidance strategies, and once the immediate threat had passed, there was usually no follow-up action on the part of war chiefs. Other respondents were less entrepreneurial and could not avoid being shaken down after having received each instalment.

While certain leaders were more magnanimous than others, UPRGO war lords seem to have been particularly prone to extorting from recruits. Who really benefited from this money remains vague though, based on the information we have.

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14 ‘Quand vous êtes resté quelque part sans salaire pendant des années, tu vis au jour le jour. Cet argent, on ne pouvait rien faire avec.’
15 This is in line with the previous finding: most respondents could not do anything productive with their money until the third instalment.
16 Duékoué is the site where militia recruits were gathered and officially demobilized under PNDDR and ONUCI supervision. The money was given in a protected compound, however, as soon as people got out, they were prone to abuse.
17 One respondent could not avoid giving half of his safety net. He was relieved of 70,000 CFA francs from his first instalment, 80,000 from the second and 100,000 from the third.
The distinction between war leaders and war leaders’ envoys was often blurred on the ground and in the respondents’ discourse, and it was not easy to distinguish between organized racketeering orchestrated by militia leaders and simple robbery by higher-ranked recruits, who were taking advantage of their position to abuse their peers. Most accounts showed that rather than giving cash directly to their chiefs, recruits were more likely to pay an intermediary, especially if the person was known to have a close relationship with their leader. Some even signed receipts! In addition, there was a certain group dynamic: as the first demobilized recruits had given money to their chiefs, the later cohorts were likely to imitate them.

If rewarding war chiefs resembled a racket in some cases, that was not the only pattern and the informal back payment to warlords varied considerably from one individual to another. Several respondents pointed out that they were not forced to give money. I also heard accounts of militia leaders gathering recruits before the first instalment was made and telling them that they were not obliged to make any financial contributions. Some recruits did not perceive it as coercion. One respondent rewarded his chief by paying for several rounds of drinks. Another said that although his chief had mentioned that he did not want anything, he was happy to give him 20,000 out of his last instalment. Allocating money to war chiefs is strongly connected to social obligation, and the majority of recruits were grateful to have been put on the official demobilization list by their militia leaders, making them eligible for financial compensation.

Another feature to take into account is to whom recruits want to give. Militias have also their hierarchy, and while some may feel more inclined to give to the general leader, others might prefer rewarding a chief who was closer to them during the war and to whom they related more. A few respondents who fought in advanced positions were keen on rewarding the chiefs of their section. In their view, he had succeeded the most important: he had preserved their lives during combat. I remember one female recruit praising her local commander: ‘I really say thank you to Colonel T. because he took good care of us. We did not lose anyone in our group. He watched our back. When he knew the day was not good, he would tell us not to move. That’s the way we worked.’ The social value of reward associated with mystic beliefs must therefore not be downplayed when examining the relationship between war chiefs and recruits.

18 Some added to that that those willing to give were nonetheless very welcome.
Has the spending of cash allowances facilitated social acceptance?

Given the well-known controversies associated with using cash transfers in the reinsertion phase of ex-combatants, it is worth questioning the extent to which the financial safety net has been helpful in securing acceptance by the community with whom ex-combatants associated, and whether it played a role in facilitating their transition to civilian life. Examining these questions is particularly relevant since most low-ranking militias had returned home 1½ to 2 years before being officially demobilized and eventually faced reinsertion issues then. Accounts widely varied per respondent. The ones who chose to remain in Guiglo, in the militia leaders’ compounds or nearby, were clearly waiting for the official disarmament to start and for the several-times-announced financial safety net. Some experienced no problems at all and were warmly welcomed by their families: ‘My folks were told I was dead. They were quite happy to see me back.’ Others had never severed contacts with their parents during their time in the armed group. As the previous chapter clearly illustrated, many recruits in fact did not need to be ‘resocialized’ after their military experience; their actual bonds with society had never been cut.

But how smooth was their return to civilian life? Accounts were rather mixed and there was no single pattern. While reinsertion problems directly experienced after having demobilized oneself were not often spontaneously mentioned (and unfortunately not systematically probed in depth during interviews), several things came up during the discussions. Shortly after their return, a certain number of militia recruits were feared by the people with whom they usually associated, especially those known to have fought with Liberian mercenaries. The account of this female recruit is particularly highlighting:

’In the beginning, I was scaring everyone. Even my cousins were afraid. Even my mother. When I was angry, I often noticed that people acted different. They were all scared of me. But I said no. What I did [during the war], it is past. But even my friends were scared, and they were saying, “She went to war, she’s going to kill you at night”. It did not feel good. So I moved on elsewhere for some time. I spent two months in Abidjan. When I came back to Guiglo, I started to sell alloco in front of the Becanti. People were coming to see me out of curiosity, also soldiers. Some were surprised, “Eh, you are here now!” Some did not even want to eat alloco, they just came to see me. It took some time, but people eventually saw me differently. I had not changed, but their perception did. They saw that I behaved well, and that I did not look for arguments with anybody. Now everything is okay.’

Like her, several respondents mentioned having felt the need to work on their image shortly after returning to their pre-war lives; they had to emphasize their

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19 Most of them had returned to their home in 2004-2005 after the end of the encampment period in a military setting (in Blolequin, Toulepleu, Zéo, or Zagné, depending on the faction integrated).

20 The Becanti is a local maquis. Alloco is a local dish, based on bananas.

21 ‘Je ne faisais pas palabres avec quelqu’un’.
non-violent attitude. If some respondents could resume their pre-war activities relatively quick, others encountered difficulties. Again, there was a multiplicity of patterns, which mostly depended on respondents’ individual attitudes, characteristics and social networks. One respondent could not go back to his previous work because he had a bad reputation. As he put it: ‘Many things happened during the war. I did not know the face of all rebels, so when the chief suspected someone and said, “This person is a rebel, he has to be killed”, we obeyed. But this man might have family in Guiglo; and now if I approach someone for work, these people can tell him that I’m not a good person and that it is better to avoid me.’ In contrast, well-known fighters had no problems resuming their pre-war jobs. One respondent who had fought in the front line with the Liberians resumed upon return his work as building painter, and even if he mentioned getting fewer contracts than before, the main cause was the general decrease in local economic activity due to the displacement of most of the local middle class, not the fear of dealing with him.

Has financial compensation facilitated social acceptance? For most demobilized militia recruits, the safety net was distributed well after their return to their community. Some had even ended their participation in the militia group two or three years earlier. This raises a first doubt as to the extent to which cash allowances played a role in facilitating social acceptance. In addition, not every combatant benefited from them. As already mentioned, the demobilization programme of the summer of 2006 was only partial and targeted 981 low-ranked militia recruits. Not everyone appeared on the list for inclusion and in a single village – even in a single family – some received the package and others did not. Selection appeared quite arbitrary in some cases. Perhaps the most interesting feature is that those who did not receive financial compensation were mocked by their peers. A posteriori, going to war and getting nothing out of it was perceived locally as ridiculous and as a waste of time. I observed this several times when I went to villages to interview demobilized recruits. There was, however, a certain tolerance with respect to this unfairness, and if the few militia recruits I interviewed who did not receive compensation indeed expressed their frustration, they seemed to accept their situation.

Respondents used their safety net very differently, constantly juggling between social obligations and personal benefit. Out of the five broad categories of expenses I identified – 1) reimbursing creditors, 2) responding to familial demands, 3) investing in an own business, 4) allocating money to war chiefs, and 5) dealing with social events (such as medical expenses, funerals, home improvements) – three would not have existed if no cash had been given to combatants. Creditors would not have rushed to ask for full payback and would have continued to display the same attitude as towards their other debtors. Relatives
would not have lined up in front of respondents’ doors, and war chiefs and 
undemobilized friends would not have had a share.

For the two other categories (investing and dealing with social events), the 
financial compensation was useful but rather limited in time and scope. When 
discussing investments, a recurring point that came up from the interviews was 
that the safety net should have been given in one go instead of in three 
instalments. Relevant investments usually involve substantial sums of money and 
small amounts are easily wasted on day-to-day expenses. With respect to social 
events, one important contribution that this extra cash has made is in allowing 
young men to emancipate, by being able to leave the family home and/or by 
becoming a short-term provider for their close family.

If I go back to the previous list of benefits and risks in using cash in the 
reinsertion stage and apply it to this case, several things are worth highlighting. I 
found no evidence in support of the argument that cash incentives encourage 
former combatants to return their weapons and return quickly to their com-

The next part examines how respondents made use of a second reinsertion 
instrument widely used in post-conflict politics to help resocialize young people 
who had temporarily joined armed groups: the provision of short-term vocational 
training. I specifically draw on observations made when studying a pilot project 
executed by a German agency (GTZ-IS). I attempt to discover the extent to 
which participating in such an externally driven humanitarian project can help 
militarized youths to secure a decent post-war livelihood.
Assessment of a pilot initiative fostering economic reinsertion

In August 2006, following militia dismantlement in Guiglo, the German agency GTZ-IS started an EU-funded project in partnership with the National DDR Programme for reinserting combatants on both sides of the front line. The first intervention targeted 500 of the 981 militias demobilized in 2006 (those who had received the financial safety net), and 500 FAFN recruits still active in the rebellion who had not yet been demobilized and had not received any financial compensation. They were offered a short education in a specific craft (tailoring, welding, carpentry, agriculture/husbandry or in small business management). Basic equipment was provided at the end to help the youths begin their activity.

I explore here the pros and cons of taking part in such intervention from the very particular perspectives of young civilians who were militarized for some time before receiving short-term reinsertion assistance. What were the entry criteria? Were there major differences between rebel and pro-government militias? From the points of view of these youths, what were the economic and social stakes in favour of participation? How did they make use of the reinsertion prospects the programme offered, and how did they integrate them with the other opportunities they encountered at the same time? The bulk of the data is based on 200 semi-structured interviews with low-ranked youths who joined government militias and rebel groups in Guiglo and Man at the start of the conflict and who benefited from assistance at some stage. Additional interviews were done with minors and with female recruits, and also with a few people who did not benefit from any support.

Project description

The initial project developed by GTZ-IS was designed to support the official DDR process once it would begin. It was supposed to intervene in the official disarmament and demobilization stage by providing operational support on site (rough renovation of infrastructure, canteen management for demobilized combatants, basic logistics for all involved agencies). In the reinsertion stage, it was supposed to provide short-term support to 1,000 pro-government militia recruits, within the framework of a pilot initiative. On paper, this reinsertion initiative was conceived as a short-term project (3 months) and was geared at preparing recruits for longer-term social and economic reintegration. It included basic literacy, sensitization to civic education, human rights, and peace education (1 month), and also a first provisional orientation towards specific reinsertion streams such as ones for job training or small businesses (2 months). Importantly, it was presented as inseparable from long-term reintegration perspectives and its main attempted contribution was to bridge the opportunities the GTZ-IS project offered.
with the reintegration support mentioned in the Ivoirian DDR Plan\textsuperscript{22} (Ball & Van De Goor, 2006; GTZ, 2007a, 2007b).

The project was supposed to start on 15 June 2005 and last six months. Due to repeated delays in the disarmament and demobilization stages, a first amendment extended its duration by eighteen months. The persistent lack of progress led to a second amendment which suspended the project in March 2006. In August 2006, in light of the partial militia dismantlement in Guiglo, the EU agreed to waive the suspension and the GTZ-IS launched the reinsertion component of the project. The first intervention targeted 500 of the 981 militias demobilized in 2006 who had received the financial safety net, and 500 FAFN recruits still active in the rebellion who had not yet been demobilized and had not received any financial compensation.\textsuperscript{23} Given that the Ivoirian DDR Plan had taken a broad definition of combatant and did not limit it solely to those in the possession of arms, (former) members who had joined an armed group and who had operated behind the front line in support of military operations were also eligible for entry.

The first step of the project consisted of a 4-week process, which included individual profiling for each participant, basic literacy\textsuperscript{24} and numeracy (or refresher sessions for the ones already literate), and a first professional orientation. The second step consisted of an 8-week process orientated towards job placement and technical training, with a strong practical component of which the content depended on which reinsertion stream had been chosen by the participant. Basic concepts of management and group business were also explained during that period. In the initial project, there was no support planned for helping participants to start up their business or for supplemental training if needed. The assumption was indeed that the short-term opportunities the project offered would be a bridge to the long-term reintegration support the Ivoirian DDR Plan would provide. But with the official DDR process not taking place, it became quite unlikely that this support would ever materialize. GTZ-IS therefore included a budget line for purchasing basic starter equipment, made possible by slightly amending the EU budget and also by drawing on a complementary source of funding. Most participants in the GTZ-IS reinsertion project therefore received basic assistance when they began their economic activity.

\textsuperscript{22} As mentioned in Chapter 4, the National DDR Plan foresaw subsequent financial benefits to reinsert demobilized combatants. It included a financial safety net for six months, possible education grants, vocational training, a subsequent starter kit, and privileged access to micro-credit. It is a real pity that it was never applied in practice.

\textsuperscript{23} Follow-up interventions took a broader perspective and enlarged the target to non-combatants.

\textsuperscript{24} It included several modules to raise awareness of civic education, human rights and peace promotion.
Both reinsertion centres – in Guiglo and in Man – started in October 2006. In Guiglo, the PNDDR provided a list of 207 demobilized militia members to include in the project, 146 were regular participants. In Man, the central rebellion administration in Bouaké had first provided a list of FAFN recruits to include in the project. When most recruits did not show up when the project started, the project staff assumed that much of the list was obsolete and entry criteria were therefore locally reviewed in collaboration with the local rebel administration. Low-ranking elements of the Forces Nouvelles were informed of the possibility of taking part in the GTZ-IS project on a voluntary basis. As talking about demobilization was still taboo at the time, in the rebel-controlled areas of 2007, the framing of the project goal was stripped of any DDR connotation and the label ‘pilot’ was extensively used with the military hierarchy, as a way to legitimize an experimental intervention that should not have drastic consequences for the zone. It worked. The mere prospect of having to release recruits in the near future was not debatable with the Com’Zone five years after the start of the conflict, but under the label ‘pilot’ the GTZ-IS project was authorized to be implemented in Man. Tables 9.1 and 9.2 present the distribution of recruits by reinsertion streams for the two towns of Guiglo and Man.

Small-scale agriculture/husbandry was the most popular track in both locations, while job training was a much more popular stream in Man. Practical workshops were set up inside the centres for technical training. In Man, there were four of them: tailoring, joinery, welding and auto mechanics; in Guiglo, there were two: tailoring and auto mechanics. Recruits who had chosen other tracks received practical training outside the centre (those who chose to specialize in ‘cold’ for instance, the repair of AC units and freezers, or in electricity): they were either working as apprentice in a local workshop or they enrolled in private technical courses, with the project agreeing to pay their tuition for a few months. For farm-related projects, GTZ-IS partnered with local farm cooperatives and the national agency ANADER (Agence Nationale d’Appui au Développement Rural), which provided technical training on site. In what follows, I examine the economic and social stakes in favour of participation. I focus in particular on how the project participants made use of the reinsertion prospects

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25 The project also included three other towns in the west: Duékoué, Blolequin and Toulepleu. These were, however, smaller-scale satellite units, mainly aimed at reaching demobilized militia recruits who had returned to relatively remote communities (Toulepleu is at the Liberian border, about 120 km from Guiglo, and half of the road is in very bad condition).

26 The training was quite flexible, and really depended on the participants’ former experience. For some, the training could be extended. Others, more experienced in the skill, could get down to work directly, sometimes even without practical training (especially if they were resuming their pre-war activity).
### Table 9.1  Distribution of project participants by reinsertion streams in Guiglo

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Source: GTZ (2007).

### Table 9.2  Distribution of project participants by reinsertion streams in Man

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<td>Welding</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (auto)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (motorbike)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapestry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joinery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMALL BUSINESSES</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GTZ (2007).
GTZ-IS offered, and how they combined it with the other opportunities that arose at the same time.

Reinsertion streams

If we look at the charts, what is striking is that the majority of respondents engaged in an activity that they had never done before the war. Only 45% of the respondents used the opportunity the project provided to continue with their previous work. Job training was the most popular track (chosen by 40%), followed by small businesses (36%) and small-scale agriculture/husbandry (23%). More than a third of the respondents said openly that they would not continue the activity after the end of the programme.

If I refine the analysis by town, the picture is different. In Man, the majority of interviewed recruits engaged in vocational training (65%), then in small businesses (21%), followed by agriculture/husbandry (14%). Only a third engaged in an activity they were familiar with before the war; the rest restarted from scratch. Three fourths of respondents said they wished to continue the activity after the end of the program, either by managing it in person or by placing someone they knew at the head of the business. In Gui-glo, job training was the less attractive path (15%), and half of respondents engaged in small businesses and in activities they were familiar with. Agriculture/husbandry was also popular, with a third of respondents choosing this stream. 40% of respondents said openly that they would eventually have someone manage their activity for them when the programme ended. Figures 9.1 and 9.2 present the data.

There are several elements to take into account when interpreting these figures. To what extent have respondents chosen their reinsertion streams and were certain tracks imposed on them? What were the main shortcomings of the profiling process? How have respondents made use of the reinsertion prospects the project offered and how have they combined it with other activities eventually engaged in at the same time? I describe the research findings below.

• Misinformation and group bias:

What degree of agency exists in the choice of reinsertion streams?

Information disseminated to (ex)combatants has been far from optimal, especially in the start of the program, when these youths had to pick a reinsertion activity.28 Many respondents were attracted to certain streams by the prospect of

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27 This loss of interest in job training is consistent with the general distribution of recruits by reinsertion streams in Guiglo (Table 9.1).
28 This is in line with other studies (Jennings, 2007).
Figure 9.1  Which reinsertion activities have respondents engaged in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Guiglo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbandry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2007)

Figure 9.2  Were respondents familiar with this activity before the war?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Guiglo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2007)

receiving subsequent inputs (in particular in small businesses) and were quickly disabused by the little they got. Individual kits amounted to 75,000 CFA francs (EUR 115), which was considered too little by the majority to attain economic sustainability. Several youths also pointed out that when they added up the price of the items they had been given, they discovered that the value of the package
was below the announced 75,000. This raised serious concerns among them and some obvious questions with regard to the transparency of the supply chain.

If we compare the content of the project reinsertion package with the long-term reintegration support the Ivoirian DDR Plan was supposed to provide ex-combatants, we can only regret the difference in scale. As detailed earlier (Chapter 4), the DDR Plan was supposed to provide demobilized combatants with several benefits, including a financial safety net for six months, possible education grants up to 200,000 CFA francs, long-term vocational training, and privileged access to micro-credit (up to 180,000 CFA francs for an individual loan, 150,000 for the purchase of equipment, and 100,000 for agricultural projects). The GTZ-IS project offered much less and only in-kind contributions. With the official DDR process failing to happen, the pilot project failed in providing the necessary support for the post-reinsertion phase. The assistance it provided remained too limited in volume and scope, and if it indeed did offer some extra to participants, it was incapable of fulfilling its primary objective of securing a sustainable livelihood for the majority of recruits. The project may also have added to the general confusion surrounding DDR and reinsertion/reintegration packages through its faulty dissemination and the mixed messages it sent. Several interviewees in fact pointed out that recruits were confused because they thought the GTZ-IS project would provide them with the package proposed in the Ivoirian DDR Plan. That partly explains why they had expected more. Failing to meet these expectations has only contributed to fueling and sustaining frustration.

Table 9.3  Nature and cost (in CFA) of individual kits in the small business track

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost (in CFA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cellphone (cabine)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cellphone (20,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recharge cards (50,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SIM card (5,000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailer (boutique):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Prime necessities products (75,000)</td>
<td>(soap, cigarettes, batteries, tea/coffee, biscuits, matches, rice, condiments, Maggi cubes...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized retailer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Depending on products (75,000)</td>
<td>(second-hand clothes (friperie), (pagnes), plastic shoes, cosmetics, rice/beans, alcohol, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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29 This is in line with other studies (Bouta, 2005; Dzinesa, 2007; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2004, 2007; Peters, 2006, 2007; Thakur, 2008).
Another feature that can explain why certain tracks were more popular than others is that some activities were initially presented as individual activities, but then at a later stage became compulsory group activities, as the initial investment costs were too high to settle the youths individually. This was in particular the case for respondents engaged in husbandry (in pig and poultry farms) and for those engaged in welding and joinery. In Man, for instance, 34 husbandry groups of five people were set up (poultry, pigs or oxen). The cost of setting up the farms varied between 956,500 and 1,133,500 CFA francs and included the construction of the stables, and the purchases of vaccines, food, livestock, and basic equipment. Seven groups of four/five people were also formed in welding: they collectively received a tool kit worth 758,736 CFA francs and the project disbursed an additional 475,000 CFA francs to cover the cost for building a basic workshop. All things combined, group support for welding approached EUR 1,900 while individual welding kits were much more basic (the individual equipment was only worth EUR 130). Sixteen recruits nevertheless chose to settle individually.

Given the striking imbalance between individual and collective kits, recruits who had entered these streams therefore had little choice: they could either join up with vague acquaintances, go into business together, with all the vagaries one can easily imagine, and receive a decent kit; or they could settle individually, in the same track, but with the disadvantage of receiving little equipment; or they could change tracks. Most respondents who eventually decided to switch tracks eventually did so at the end of the project period and thus could not benefit from the full training associated with their new choice. Several youths who were initially enrolled in husbandry or welding/joinery preferred switching to the small business track and to settle individually. Clearly, they did not want to be forced to go into business in a group, with people they barely knew (the trust issue was cited several times by the respondents), and they had not found the individual kit attractive enough to remain in their initial track. This push towards group activities might have been the cause for the widespread drop-out of militia members: in January 2007, project participants had already decreased by one third in Guiglo, dropping from 207 to 146. Rebel participants were much more assiduous.

Although some groups broke up shortly after setting up business, some have continued for quite a while, and I can testify to a few working projects. However,

30 This ranges between EUR 1,460 and 1,730 by group.
31 This is equivalent to EUR 1,160 and EUR 725.
32 This is in line with other studies. When Pouligny (2004) compared the survival rate of micro-enterprises supported within the framework of a reinsertion initiative, Congolese individual projects scored 65% versus 30% for Mozambican group initiatives.
very quickly, operational issues arose. With the farms, it was often difficult to secure the necessary land to raise feed for the livestock (maize and cassava). This was partially managed in the beginning by donating feed, but when the bags were empty, finding enough resources to feed the animals became a serious problem. The youths who were not from the area had to negotiate plots with the local landowners, which was not always possible. Two respondents I met six months after establishing their farm told me that they were about to divide the remaining pigs between them, and to continue farming individually. They had had so many difficulties in finding a field to plant maize to feed the pigs, that in their view, splitting the group and continuing on their own was the only solution. It had the advantage of being flexible: ‘If we go back to our own villages, we can ask for a plot. People help each other. But here, we are strangers. We have too many difficulties in cultivating land.’

With the welding/joinery workshops, trust was a main issue among group members and vis-à-vis potential clients. A welding group felt the need to relocate to Danané, two hours west of Man, because they genuinely believed that given their rebel past in Man, they would get fewer customers if they stayed there. In contrast, other groups had no problem settling in the town they were in during their military engagement. Another issue was more practical. If, after a while, individual group members wanted to go elsewhere (to respond to familial obligations for instance), it was difficult to split up the expensive machines and it was quite unlikely that when it did happen, the workshop would be able to generate enough profit to be able to compensate them properly. One option was to sell the equipment, but this would jeopardize the whole enterprise; another option would be to barely give anything to the ones leaving and to let the other group members continue. If reinsertion tracks were never imposed on project participants, several incentives acted as push factors in informing their choice, such as changing information, the imbalance between individual and collective kits, the confusion arising from the multiplicity of initiatives parallel to the official DDR Plan, etc. Yet these factors do not fully explain every choice made and there is the need for a deeper understanding of recruits’ individual trajectories to be able to understand this.

The profiling process
There were several shortcomings in the profiling process used by the humanitarian agency. What struck me most was the lack of perspective regarding combatants’ pre-war profiles, in particular with respect to their professional trajec-

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33 Group members were not necessarily from the same area.
ries. The general assumption was that most participants had limited skills, almost no professional background, and that the project would offer them a unique opportunity to develop their individual capacities. This is in line with the ‘loose molecule’ hypothesis well anchored in development circles, which states that the base of an armed group consists of jobless, uneducated and dissocialized youths who are expected to start their lives over from scratch when they disengage from military activities. If we look at section 3 of the profiling sheet which refers to professional background (Figure 9.3), it is rather thin. It consists of one question – ‘Did you have a job or an activity before the war?’ – and eight closed answers: ‘1. No activity; 2. Civil servant; 3. Employed in the private sector; 4. Self-employed; 5. Small business; 6. Farmer; 7. Pupil; 8. Student’. There is no mention of any time period, no room for providing details. Yet, we are talking about people who are likely to have worked in a range of activities before the war, from an early age, in several locations. Chapter 7 illustrated that clearly, and when examining the pre-war profiles of militarized youths, it became evident that most of them were regularly earning money before the war. Some were doing contractual work and their income varied according to contract opportunities, some were working as daily labour, and some had a regular income. The majority was employed in the informal economy, and a few had very decent jobs. Another interesting finding was that from the day they started working, respondents were successively pushed and pulled into activities from one region to another, following opportunities, responding to familial demands, fulfilling certain commitments; they usually had to work in many locations before attaining self-sufficiency. With such backgrounds in mind, oversimplifying recruits’ past in a general profiling sheet does not appear to be the ideal approach, and should not be used as a base for orientating militarized youths towards specific tracks. To gain a thorough understanding of recruits’ individual trajectories and to advise them well, there is the need to dive into their life stories, in order to give sufficient credit to their personal and professional evolution.

Local notions of ownership, lucrativeness, and seizing other opportunities

It is an unfortunate fact, but humanitarian practitioners, from field officers to headquarters staff, are in general deeply annoyed by the fact that their target group does not perform according to plan and divert from project objectives. This

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34 This tendency towards oversimplification has been noted by several scholars in many contexts. In a case study on Darfur, Tubiana (2009) points out that despite years of presence in the field, some practitioners continue to misinterpret the context, as they oversimplify too much extremely complex social processes.
### ORIENTATION DES BENEFICIAIRES

#### Bureau des Projets : GTZ-IS/DDR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- IDENTIFICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personne(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.5- Situation familiale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mariage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veuf/Veuve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nombre d'enfants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2- ANTECEDENT SCOLAIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niveau atteint à l'âge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formations techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autres formations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4- MOTIVATION POUR LA REINSERTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quel est le but de votre retraite?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rechercher un emploi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travailler à temps partiel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autre?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5- POUR LES BENEFICIAIRES AGES, QUI VONT FAIRE UNE TRANSITION vers un autre emploi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Souhaitez-vous apprendre un métier dans l'agriculture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autre métier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Référence de la fiche technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numéro</th>
<th>Nom de l'entretien</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork (2007)
is usually interpreted as deviant behaviour, it is fought against in practice, and because of operational imperatives, there is rarely the time or interest to seek to understand what motivate participants to make such a different use of opportunities provided. This case study is no exception. When a certain number of respondents ended their activity or ‘disappeared’ out of sight of the project staff, this was considered a failure. The mere conception that these youths had changed their mind and had chosen to invest their time in a different activity than the one initially picked was perceived quite negatively. This is indeed linked to different notions of ownership. Even though the term conveys the common-sense wisdom that in order to be successful, an intervention has to be embraced by those who have to live with it (Donais, 2007), most interventions remain externally driven, and local notions of ownership are rarely taken into account.

In examining how the youths I interviewed made use of the reinsertion prospects the project offered, a main finding was that many of them took the opportunity to place someone they trusted in charge of the project activity, while they were investing their time in more lucrative matters. Such an arrangement had the advantage of providing income-generating activities to close relatives and, in some cases, could even provide the youth with an extra income. Another finding was that many respondents who were supposed to run cabines (cabines are cellphone stalls, where people pay to make phone calls) had actually put someone in charge to manage it for them. The main reason for such behaviour relates to local notions of lucratively, namely the lucratively of the GTZ-IS project compared to the lucratively of any alternative opportunities. Understandably, if more interesting opportunities emerged elsewhere, project participants were likely to be attracted by these. The account of this female respondent who opted not to participate in the first wave of the project is particularly informative:

‘Before the war, I was selling things. I used to go to Ghana to purchase goods, and later I was selling them in Côte d’Ivoire: pagnes, shoes, small stuff. I was also tâcheron, that means that I was taking contracts with the local timber industry, hiring workers to execute them. I used to take afforestation contracts. It is like being head of your own company; you agree on a price, you manage your workers, the timber company pays. They pay very well in fact. For this year, I already completed the afforestation contracts. We worked protected areas, in the forêts classées. You can be paid about 70-80,000 francs per hectare, and then you pay the workers, and then you can perhaps earn 30,000 francs per hectare. With the money, I was paying for my other trade, selling things. I also gave to my family. I can say I ran a small business. I paid taxes, I have papers which prove it, and when I go to the timber industry to negotiate the contract, they can see that I comply with the norms […]’

‘After the war, I restarted the afforestation contracts in March last year [2006]. I responded to a call and they took me, they gave me a contract. And then a project came, for re-integrating ex-combatants. My name was even on their list. But I went to see the project staff and I said: “No. I am currently busy now. I have already committed to work and I cannot do
two activities at the same time. So if there is a second wave in the project, put me in it then, but not now."

The GTZ-IS project has failed to embed itself in lucrative opportunities offered locally. Given the local violent history of land tenure, it did not want to engage in cultivation of perennial crops that would have implied a long-term use of land, and it did not really take note of the fact that several project participants had chosen to follow this path outside the project framework (and many times at the expense of it). Heveaculture was particularly in vogue in Guiglo when the fieldwork was being conducted, a popularity amplified by a campaign run by a local export rubber industry to incite small farmers to raise this crop, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, certain warlords had even converted themselves into development brokers to liaise with this burgeoning hevea industry. One can only regret that the German project did not take part in such dynamics. By failing to link with the main export-oriented industries, the project stayed confined to limited opportunities and failed to connect with sustainable employment options. In the follow-up interventions led by GTZ-IS, the focus on labour-intensive work (road repairs for instance) does not appear strategic, as it continued to only provide the youths with short-term gain. Besides, one can seriously question the necessity of liaising with an expensive internationally driven project to promote contract work in an area where functioning local chambers of commerce exist and where the announcement of upcoming labour-intensive work is usually followed by overwhelming applications.

The specificities of the youngest recruits

In early writings, Brett and McCallin wrote something profoundly disturbing about the youngest combatants: ‘These children have no skills for life in peacetime and are accustomed to getting their way through violence’ (Brett & McCallin, 1996). Child soldiers were portrayed as having no connections in society, without skills, incompetent and prone to violence, and it was strongly implied that they were trapped in a vicious cycle, and that they would always experience difficulties in returning to a non-violent routine because they had been actors in and witnesses of too many atrocities during the war. Such a quote is disturbing because it assumes a causal relationship between actions executed in warfare and processes of demobilization, and it draws the hasty conclusion that former child recruits are cursed, and that they are unlikely to reinsert well in society by them-

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1 Thanry in Guiglo (wood/coal); the CHC in Zagné (rubber); several timber companies in Man.
2 Employment intensive work is locally named HIMO. The acronym refers to works ‘à Haute Intensité de Main d’Œuvre’.
3 This observation has also been made by other scholars (KLEM & DOUMA, 2008).
selves. Research on children’s and adolescents’ processes of demobilization has in fact largely remained confined to the examination of external interventions with the inherent bias of overestimating the impact of projects in children’s re-insertion phase and of largely ignoring the role of endogenous features. Here, I try to rehabilitate some of these endogenous dynamics in the immediate demobilization phase, before reflecting on an intervention that targeted children associated with the rebel forces in Man, from the points of view of the ones who benefited from this intervention.4

Demobilization accounts varied a lot depending on individuals, and included stories of escape, self-demobilization, and cases of commanders directly handing over recruits to humanitarian staff (see Chelpi-den Hamer, 2010 for detailed demobilization stories). The use of children as soldiers has come to be perceived so negatively in recent years that parties to conflicts are in general quite cooperative about stopping the practice, once the peak of the conflict has passed. In many accounts, children’s length of stay in the armed group was linked to the length of stay of the group in the area. When there was a move to establish the base in another location, rebels often took some children with them while letting others go. Triggers to demobilization usually included discussions with caregivers, the visit of a parent to the camp, a change in command, the death of the direct chief, seizing an opportunity to escape (absence of chief, not returning from leave), and, sometimes, the emergence of the child’s critical consciousness (as one put it: ‘It is not worth staying, I can be killed tomorrow’). In some cases, release was negotiated by a family member. When bargaining was not possible or when the child had no one to bargain for him, a risky escape and the ability to profit from external interventions were the only way out:

‘I wanted to quit the rebel forces, but I could not. Because once, one man told them he wanted to quit, and they killed him in front of me. I was scared. There were other children in the camp, but for them, there was no problem in leaving because they often had brothers in the rebel forces who could negotiate their departure with the chief. I had no brother in the rebel forces, so I was obliged to stay. They never gave me permission when I asked for it to visit my parents. If UNICEF had not come with the project, I would still be in the camp.’

4 The project targeting child soldiers was then run by the Ivoirian NGO ODAFEM and was funded by UNICEF. The first step of the project entailed a three-month process, which included listening, counseling, individual profiling, medical care, sports, an initial career orientation session, basic numeracy and literacy courses (refresher sessions for the already literate). During that period, demobilized children had to stay day and night in the transition centre, where they were offered proper care, shared accommodation, shower facilities, a functioning canteen, and basic entertainment (games, video). There were strict rules inside the centre premises and children had to ask for permission if they wanted to leave the centre to go somewhere else, even during daytime. The second step of the project consisted of a short-term vocational education programme. Youths were placed on a temporary basis at local entrepreneurs’ workshops for a six-month period, at the end of which it was assumed that they would have acquired the basic skills to continue the work with a starter kit of basic tools/material.
Once the child was demobilized, accounts were rather mixed in terms of community acceptance. Some respondents reported having experienced extreme rejection by their direct environment, they were either isolated upon return, feared or mocked. In contrast, others mentioned having been warmly welcomed from the start and could easily blend in. The role of parents, caregivers and, in some cases, village chiefs, has been important factors in putting an end to verbal abuse and isolation as they were mediating the social reintegration of the child in the community. A few respondents mentioned having gone through some kind of cleansing ritual shortly after their return home, to purify them of their wrongdoing. The accounts below are quite illustrative of this diversity of stories:

‘When my sister and I returned to our village, my mother told me that I was no longer her child. She had told me not to join the rebels, and I had not listened to her. She was not happy. But then my grandfather forgave me, and she accepted. My grandfather called my mother and told her: “What the child did, it is not his fault. It is his sister’s fault because she asked him to follow her.” They did not forgive my sister. She left the day after our return. She slept, then she left, without telling anyone.’

‘When we went back to our parents, they were very happy. Nobody bothered us. They thought that we were dead, that we had already been killed. I moved back in with my father and mother. I started helping my mother in the fields. My father was sick and had stopped working.’

‘They were all scared of me. They would not come close to me because they thought I was violent, I could kill someone. They were scared. I was mostly alone. I was sad. I had no friends. When she saw that, my tutrice gathered the people in the neighborhood to ask them forgiveness. She told them that I would not harm them and that they could play with me. Now I’m fine. I have no problem anymore.’

‘In my village, everyone knows I was a rebel. Here in town, some people know, some people don’t. It is not a problem because I was never stationed in Man when I was in the rebel forces. I was close to the Liberian border. Here I have no contacts anymore with soldiers. I play football, everyday at 5 p.m., after I’m done with work.’

A project ran by a local NGO (under UNICEF funding) had quite a mixed impact on the lives of the children interviewed. One very important effect is that it boosted the number of demobilizations: some children self-demobilized when they heard that they had the option to register for a project, others were directly referred to humanitarian staff by military commanders, and others were traced back to their village when NGOs toured war-affected areas to provide support to children associated with armed forces. Another positive impact is that it provided short-term relief to children who had entered the reinsertion project. They were supplied with free food on a daily basis, they had access to medical care for a few months, and some benefited from school supplies for the ones who resumed schooling. But in its core aspects, the impact was rather mitigated because it often occurred several years after children had demobilized themselves; the intervention only played a marginal role in facilitating his or her social reinsertion, and while one would have expected that, because of their limited social
capital, children would have embraced the opportunities humanitarian interventions offered (by working hard during their training, by showing that they were motivated, by being assiduous), longitudinal follow-up of some of the children provides a different picture – actually showing quite high dropout rates. Clearly, reinsertion assistance has to be redefined in order to bear any fruit. Projects targeting children have tended to miss the dynamics of these young people’s lives by negatively perceiving those who deviate from the initial activity; and like with their older peers, there is to date a limited interest in seeking to understand what motivates them to do so.

Concluding remarks

Recourse to humanitarianism is far from being the ideal way to alleviate suffering, yet it is a widely promoted solution and is usually tolerated by parties in conflict. If one should not long for it, there is no way to avoid it. The challenge, therefore, is to find a satisfactory way to put external interventions into perspective, especially as general enthusiasm for humanitarian values is turning into general scepticism. Pouligny (2004) genuinely hopes for a change in mentality, a ‘revolution’, which would redefine the function of humanitarian experts and would conceive them as facilitators of local negotiation processes, not practitioners. For this revolution to occur, a serious questioning of the current praxis is needed, with a new approach that must show more flexibility, patience and modesty in terms of aims. It is highly unlikely that a short-term intervention constrained by limited means changes the life of an individual. But if it relates well to its immediate context, it may diminish someone’s burden and potentially help them to develop. This is the real operational challenge to take up: no longer regarding projects in isolation.

The examples of externally driven interventions given in this chapter are striking illustrations of the fact that humanitarianism is far from being at the core of the post-war context of western Côte d’Ivoire. In contrast to other social dynamics, humanitarianism has not been the central driving force in the local environment, and people have not hesitated to opt out when better opportunities emerged elsewhere. Perhaps the fact that Côte d’Ivoire has not been as ravaged as Liberia or Sierra Leone can be advanced as explanatory factor: the country is still rich and when the odds are good, it is still full of lucrative opportunities to take up. We are far from a situation where a myriad of humanitarian projects would run the risk of drying up important social mechanisms. What we saw instead is that humanitarianism has been locally used as something extra: to participants, it provided a social opportunity among a wide range of other social opportunities; to local dignitaries, it provided a way to expand their brokerage portfolio and to bolster their local political influence. It is however worth re-
flecting on what were the driving determinants of such effects: was it because of a question of dosage? (i.e. one could argue for instance that since interventions were marginal in western Côte d’Ivoire, such effects were all the more exacerbated since people could not rely too much on them). Or was it more due to local opportunity structures, which inevitably differ from one context to another? It is difficult to clearly answer this questioning because I did not study in depth all the factors that were at play, yet it is worth keeping such an interrogation in mind, to avoid drawing tautological conclusions.