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Is Reintegration Still Worth Doing Eight Years After the Ceasefire?

Situational Analysis of Ex-Combatants in the Pool Region, Republic of Congo

Magali Chelpi-den Hamer
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Based on fieldwork conducted in May 2011

Magali Chelpi-den Hamer
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BEPC Brevet d’Études du Premier Cycle du second degré
CFCO Chemin de Fer Congo Océan
CNR Conseil National de la Résistance (until 2007)
CNR Conseil National des Républicains (after 2007)
DDR Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
FADR Forces d'Autodéfense de la Résistance
HCREC Haut Commissariat à la Réinsertion des Ex-Combattants
IDA International Development Association
IOM International Organization for Migration
MCDDI Mouvement Congolais pour la Démocratie et le Développement Intégral
MDRP Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program
MUCODEC Mutuelle Congolaise d’Épargne et de Crédit
NGO Nongovernmental organization
PCT Parti Congolais du Travail
PDR Programme de Démobilisation et Réinsertion
PNDDR Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion
RCERP Republic of Congo Emergency Reintegration Program
RN Route Nationale
RoC Republic of Congo
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UPADS Union Panafricaine pour la Démocratie Sociale
Executive Summary

Although official warfare in the Republic of Congo stopped more than eight years ago, the Pool region has continued to feel the collateral effects of war until now at a scale largely ignored by the general public. The Pool region is where the Ninjas, a group of local militias, originated during the civil strife and retreated to afterwards. Peace and recovery did not gain traction in the area until 2010/11.

Key findings of this analysis of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process include:

- **The lack of a public security presence**: The Pool region has largely been deprived of public security forces over the past thirteen years (1998-2010), which led to power abuse. Until recently, several Ninja bases remained throughout the Pool region, led by free-riding commanders operating independently of any official Ninja structure. These groups abused the local population in a number of ways, including forced labor, excessive taxation, torture, and unauthorized exploitation of land.

- **The recognition of intra-regional disparity**: Warfare affected localities very differently. While the southern districts have been calm for the past eight years, abuse was regularly reported along the railroad prior to 2011.

- **The recent efforts of the State to restore security in the region**: As of 2010, with Operations KINZOUNOU and KIMIA,1 the national army finally reentered the Pool region to secure the area and to reinstitute a formal judicial system. In 2009 and 2011, disarmament operations employing “cash for weapons” were also undertaken with governmental funding.

- **The unlikely resumption of war**: The current political context has changed since the late 1990s, when many Ninjas felt obliged to rejoin the fight for fear of violent retaliation. There is currently no opposition in country strong enough to challenge the power of the current president; hence, the state has little incentive to hunt down an already weak opposition.

- **The economic situation of ex-combatants**: There have been many self-demobilizations in the past decade, and many ex-combatants have already learned to cope. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, they are generally neither better nor worse off economically than non-combatants.

- **The heterogeneity of ex-combatants**: Ex-combatants do not constitute a homogeneous group. Therefore, their reintegration needs differ. The consulting team developed a typology to help understand the profiles of all ex-combatants.

The main recommendations of this study are:

- **Non-targeted assistance**: The consulting team recommends pairing recent governmental disarmament operations with community-driven reconstruction programming to provide closure to the population affected by the war. The main focus of programming should be to reenergize local economies destroyed by the war, especially medium-scale agriculture and animal husbandry, and to open up the region to development.

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1 *Kinzounou* means peace in Lari, the language of the Lari people in the Pool region, and *kimia* means peace in Lingala, a language spoken along the Congo River between Lisala and Kinshasa.
judicial efforts: To ensure effective program implementation, it is strongly recommended that the Republic of Congo be supported in its efforts to restore security and public order in the region. Assistance to the building and rehabilitation of public infrastructure to rein-

stall the gendarmerie and police stations has been absent in most localities of the Pool region since 1998; it is therefore recommended to avoid a gap between the end of Operation KIMIA and the redeployment of public security forces in the Pool region.
Part 1 – Introducing the study

The Republic of Congo (RoC) has experienced three successive rounds of civil war and several periods of political violence since 1993. The Pool region was a main theatre of violence in the last two conflicts, and two peace agreements were brokered specifically for this region in 2003 and 2005. Over this period, combat “ended” many times, and several programs and approaches to reintegrating ex-combatants were implemented. The World Bank twice provided assistance to encourage the peace efforts—specifically the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants—once in 2004-2005 under the Programme de Démobilisation et Réinsertion (PDR-IDA) funding scheme; and again in 2005-2009 through the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) framework, which provided targeted reintegration support to 19,000 self-demobilized ex-combatants.

Despite these efforts, the Pool region remained difficult to access, as it housed Pasteur Ntumi’s armed Ninja Nsilulu movement. Until recently, some localities were prone to power abuse, which led to much insecurity. Staff from the Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (PNDDR) pointed out that many sites were located in a “red zone” and were therefore still too dangerous to receive reintegration assistance under the MDRP framework.

Once the MDRP program accessed the Pool region in the second half of 2008, 1,679 ex-combatants who had self-demobilized in the preceding years received assistance.

Due to the centrality of the Pool region in the last two conflicts and the continuing insecurity in parts of it, an analysis of the current situation there is necessary to understand the overall state of security in the RoC.

1. Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to analyze the extent of reintegration of ex-combatants in the Pool region and to formulate recommendations for potential future action.

While the initial MDRP project had made plans to reach the remaining active combatants in the Pool region (the estimated target was initially set at 5,000), it could not do so during the implementation period due to the volatile political environment. This raised

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3 PDR is a program targeting ex-combatants and funded by the World Bank.
4 MDRP is a multi-donor trust fund funded by both IDA and other donors. The program initially targeted 30,000 individuals: 19,000 “self-demobilized” combatants to be reintegrated, 5,000 individuals still active in the Ninja movement, and 6,000 police and gendarme officers to downsize the Force Publique.
5 The term “red zone” has been used in the Pool region until recently to describe an unstable area out of reach of humanitarian programs.
6 Most came from Kinkala, Ngoma Tsé-Tsé, and the southern districts of Boko and Louingui. 449 received assistance in farming, 515 in small-scale husbandry, 28 in fish pond aquaculture, and 685 in small businesses. Two beneficiaries received support for developing their craft. In the Pool region, assistance was either delivered to groups of individuals or to individuals directly; it eventually resulted in the creation of 554 economic micro-projects.
the question of whether or not a complementary program would be needed to bring closure to armed violence in the Pool region. Were the situational analysis to recommend such an intervention, the report was to formulate recommendations on the form such an initiative should take to have the most impact.

The consulting team evaluated the extent of community acceptance and social reintegration of ex-combatants in twelve localities of the Pool region. This included ex-combatants who had benefited from past reintegration assistance, ex-combatants who had not benefitted from any previous programs, and recruits who presented themselves as still involved in the movement. The team's aim was twofold:

- To gauge the current local security situation, and specifically to determine whether the immediate security context had improved, worsened, or stayed the same in the past 5 years; and
- To determine the extent of intraregional disparities within the Pool region using detailed data collection instruments in several locations, with attention given to the perspectives of both ex-combatants and community members.

2. Methodology

Research team

The research team was composed of one international consultant, who served as the team leader, and three national consultants. The national consultants included an academic, a practitioner with 20 years of experience with marginalized youth and child soldiers, and an experienced humanitarian worker who, as a native of the Pool region, had privileged contacts with the administrative authorities in Kinkala and the local churches.

The team pursued a three-pronged approach when designing the qualitative instruments for data collection. The instruments were designed to gather information about:

- The locality itself;
- Ex-combatants, regardless of whether or not they had received reintegration support; and
- Ex-combatants' income generating activities, regardless whether or not these resulted from external support or included micro-projects funded under the MDRP framework.

Each member of the team was assigned a task, which he or she completed in each of the localities visited. The national consultant who had the most knowledge of the Pool region undertook the focus groups, while the two other national consultants interviewed ex-combatants individually regarding their life stories and their involvement in micro-projects. The international consultant assisted with the focus groups and administered several individual interviews with ex-combatants, investigating their pre- and postwar trajectories and the level of their current socioeconomic reintegration. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with key informants in Brazzaville, including interviews with the National Coordinator of the Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (PNDDR), senior staff at the Haut Commissariat à la Réinsertion des Ex-Combatants (HCREC), and political representatives of the Conseil National des Républicains (CNR). Pasteur Ntumi, president of the CNR, was also interviewed in Soumona.

This approach maximized the amount of information that could be collected in the field in a limited time frame while still allowing relatively systematic data collection. The bulk of the instruments used for the study can be applied in the future to similar research provided the necessary contextual adjustments are made.

Research instruments

The first component of the research focused on the locality itself. Focus groups were used to gather general and specific information on the locality, including:

- The number of inhabitants before the war;
- The number of inhabitants now;
- The extent of local immigration and emigration;
- Administrative divisions and respective division heads, such as villages, quartiers, and blocs;
A listing of functioning schools, health centers, and churches;

Market days;

Representation of political parties;

Community projects building or rehabilitating schools or health centers in the past few years by an external agency;

Main pre- and postwar economic activities;

The local taxation system;

Local arrangements for access land;

Main sources of conflict in the locality;

Local mechanisms of conflict resolution;

The effect of the successive waves of violence in the Pool between 1998 and 2011 (year of the study);

The extent of local armed mobilization;

The recent history and circumstances of violent events;

The general perception of the remaining ex-combatants within the community; and

The community’s current challenges and needs (see appendix 4 for the detailed checklist).

Participants in the focus groups included the local leadership, community organizers, health and education professionals, youth, religious leaders, and other key sources of information who were found or recommended during fieldwork. The consulting team conducted a brief presentation on the objectives and process of the evaluation to both the representatives of ex-combatants and the focus group participants together. The ex-combatants were then split from the focus groups to take part in individual interviews. Splitting ex-combatants from focus group participants did not pose a problem during fieldwork. While female ex-combatants were contacted for individual interviews, the overwhelming majority of interviewees were male.

The second component of the research focused on the life story of ex-combatants before, during, and after their engagement in armed groups in an attempt to understand the socioeconomic choices they had made and the current challenges they faced. This was done through individual interviews7 (see appendix 6 for the detailed checklist), which included questions on:

- Their pre-war lives, including their educational and professional trajectories and their relationships with close family and social networks;
- How and where they were recruited and why they joined armed groups;
- Their actions during the war;
- Their demobilization experience, such as whether they had completely severed their links with the armed movement or continued to be involved sporadically;
- The evolution of their socioeconomic situation since demobilization; and
- How they envision their future and options outside armed groups, including their thoughts on the different approaches to reintegration, regardless of whether or not they had taken part in a reintegration project.

The final component of the research consisted of gathering information on ex-combatants’ micro-projects, including both micro-projects that had emerged out of spontaneous initiatives (in other words, income generating activities initiated by ex-combatants without external help) and projects that were eventually aided by external assistance (mostly through the ex-combatant reintegration package provided by the PNDDR in 2008 with some assistance from the 2004 IDA-PDR).

Data collected on micro-projects included (see appendix 5 for the detailed checklist):

- Whether it was individual, family-based, or a group activity;
- Whether it comprised ex-combatants only or included other community members.

7 One exception was a focus group carried out in Brazzaville and composed of six individuals still active around Ntumi. However, once the focus group was over, each person was eventually approached individually.
Whether it was a spontaneous grouping or fostered by an NGO;
- The type and amount of input received when externally funded;
- The type and amount of personal or family investment (initial and recurring);
- The training received;
- The similarity between pre- and postwar activity;
- The extent of familial help;
- Any change in group composition over time; and
- General working arrangements, including the distribution of potential benefits.

This component of the research explored the impact of the MDRP initiative on ex-combatants’ micro-projects. Meanwhile, efforts were also made to identify externally-funded micro-projects that were set up in the early 2000s as part of earlier targeted reintegration programs to explore their impact and evolution over time.

Fieldwork Locations

Twelve localities, spread across five districts, were chosen in the Pool region according to several criteria (see map 2):

- Localities where PNDDR external reintegration assistance was provided - Kinkala, Boko Center, and Louingui Center
- Localities where PNDDR external reintegration assistance was not directly provided - Loutéhété, Lindzolo, and Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare
- Localities with recent cases of abuse involving Ninja elements - Matoumbou, Missafou, Madzia, and Voula
- Remote localities, which despite being on the Chemin de Fer Congo Océan railroad (CFCO), are isolated and far from a main road - Massembo-Loubaki, Madzia, Ngoma, and Tsé Tsé Gare
- Urban localities - Kinkala and Brazzaville
- Rural localities - This requirement was met by the above localities, which ranged from very small to large villages
- Localities with elements still close to Pasteur Ntumi - Brazzaville and Missafou
- Accessibility - In May 2011, when the study was carried out, the unstable areas of the Pool region had only just been secured. The consulting team was based in Kinkala during the week. Local sites for focus groups and interviews were chosen such that day trips were possible from Kinkala. Localities beyond the town Mindouli were out of range. Mindouli had initially been chosen for a visit, but due to the very bad road conditions (the evaluation occurred at the end of the rainy season), the team could not go further than Loutéhété on the Kinkala-Mindouli axis. The national road was completely blocked by trucks that had been stuck in the mud for several days.

On the advice of the commander of Operation KIMIA for the Pool region, the consulting team chose to be escorted by a military escort for the trips in the districts of Mindouli (Missafou, Loutéhété, Massembo-Loubaki) and in Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare. The measure was precautionary and only for traveling. The escort did not stay with the team during the data collection.

Limitations and mitigation measures

Although the methodology had many strengths, it also had limitations. The second and third components of the research tended to concentrate on a particular category of ex-combatants: those who had already settled and who were either native to the locality or recent immigrants. Ex-combatants that had not formally settled were difficult to approach. We were told that some were still living nearby in the bush, but did not dare to approach the locality since the start of the military operation in the area in November 2010. This challenge was partly mitigated by meeting individuals still close to Ntumi in Brazzaville, as the research team learned that some ex-combatants had come to him for protection after the army was deployed nearby.

Systematic data collection was also uneven, especially

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8 Operation KIMIA was deployed in the Pool region in October/November 2010 to restore security and the authority of the RoC in the region in order to pave the way for the reinstallation of the public security forces and the administrative authorities. More details on military Operation KIMIA are given below, in the section highlighting the RoC military response from 2010 onwards.
within the individual interviews, and not all points in the checklist were explored in depth. Nevertheless, the data collection yielded interesting interview fragments that are used in this report to illustrate points and claims.

Another limitation was spatial. The Pool region consists of 13 districts; however, the field team was only able to conduct fieldwork in twelve locations spread across five districts: Kinkala, Mindouli, Ngoma Tsé Tsé, Boko, and Louingui. To mitigate the effects of spatial limitation, the consulting team paid attention to target localities known to have hosted Ninja bases until recently, as well as localities where cases of abuses were reported.

The study might have been enhanced if localities in the districts of Mayama, Kindamba, and Vinza had been included. These northern districts of the Pool are more remote and not on the railroad. They are also known to have been starting points of the insurgency, and Ntumi still seems to have some influence there. During our encounter with Pasteur Ntumi in Soumona, he reported owning land in the district.
of Vinza, where he grows a strain of cassava that is more resistant to environmental hazards. Many of the people who live close to him in Soumona work on his plantation. These districts were not included in the assessment because of the accessibility concerns discussed above.

3. **Report Structure**

The report is divided into six sections. Part 1 introduces the study, stressing the rationale and objectives of the analysis and describing the research approach and methodology. Part 2 provides contextual information on the changing dynamics of the Ninja movement and describes how the movement shifted from armed movement to political party over the years. Part 3 adds broader context by presenting the evolution of the security situation in the Pool region and by illustrating significant intraregional disparities. Part 4 examines the current situation of ex-combatants in the Pool region with a focus on how they fit into their local environment. Part 5 reflects on past disarmament and reintegration initiatives in the region and extracts their core approach. Finally, Part 6 concludes by formulating an intervention strategy for the Pool region, drawing on the main findings of the recent fieldwork and on the lessons learned from past interventions.
Part 2 – The changing dynamics of the Ninja movement

The Ninja movement has evolved greatly across several dimensions and over time: from the elements loyal to Kolélas in the beginning (1993-1997) to the connection with Ntumi after Kolélas’ exile (1998-to date); from armed movement to a political party; and from a movement largely composed of an urban base to one that recruited in the rural areas of the Pool region. A few authors have reflected on the changes the militias underwent in Congo, focusing on the 1990s and the early 2000s (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 1999; Ngodi, 2006; Yengo, 2006). However, there is a gap in the literature on the changes in recent years. This study partially addresses that gap.

1. The Ninja’s early years (1993-1997)

Congo’s successive wars in the 1990s were primarily linked to political rivalries between three politicians—Bernard Kolélas, Pascal Lissouba, and Denis Sassou-Nguesso—and their struggles for power. Bernard Kolélas, native of the Pool region, was the defeated presidential candidate in 1992 for the MCDDI party and was the Mayor of Brazzaville between 1994 and 1997. Pascal Lissouba was the Congolese President between 1992 and 1997 as a member of the UPADS political party before being ousted by army Colonel Sassou-Nguesso of the PCT party. Denis Sassou-Nguesso was President between 1979 and 1992 and regained power over Lissouba in 1997 after bitter fighting. These three political factions utilized parts of the civilian population as armed militias as early as 1993. Lissouba’s armed militia was the Cocoyes, Sassou Nguesso’s armed branch was the Cobras, and Kolélas’ was the Ninjas.

The author Bazenguissa-Ganga stresses that in contrast to the Cocoyes and the Cobras, the Ninjas remained neutral for a time during the period from 1993 to 1997 (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 1996; 1999). After the truce of 1994, most members of the Ninjas were demoralized; they had not received any payment for their services, and during the second Brazzaville war in 1997 some did not agree with MCDDI leaders when they were urged to fight alongside Lissouba’s militia, a former enemy. Some influential Ninja recruiters and commanders joined the camp of Sassou Nguesso shortly after the resumption of hostilities in 1997. Those who stayed loyal to the MCDDI generally lacked arms, equipment, and training compared to the other groups.

Bazenguissa-Ganga also highlights differences between the first generation of fighters and later cohorts (1996; 1999). Those who participated in the hostilities of 1993-94 were mostly young men, born and raised in Brazzaville. By contrast, those who took up arms in 1997 were primarily from rural areas and were much less educated. Nearly all of the fighters who participated in the second Brazzaville war in 1997 were organized and trained outside of the city.

2. From Ninja to Nsilulu and FADR: the melting pot (1998 to date)

The Nsilulu movement emerged in 1998 and was mainly concentrated in the Pool region. It emerged primarily as a response to the abuse against civilians by public security forces in the northern districts of Pool during 1997-1998, a time when retaliation against
former political opponents and their perceived allies was common.\(^9\) Almost from the start, the movement was led by Frédéric Bitsangou\(^10\), a preacher and relative newcomer in the Congolese political arena who later became known as Pasteur (or Révérend) Ntumi.

While the term Ninja has been widely used to refer to the Nsilulu movement, the two movements are distinct. The Ninjas Nsilulu recruited in the Pool in 1998 bore little resemblance to the political militia loyal to Kolélas from 1993-97. However, there were some links between the two movements (Ngodi, 2009; Yengo, 2006). Because they were hunted down by government militias, some of the Ninjas who had stayed loyal to Kolélas during the 1993-97 period joined the Nsilulu in 1998 for fear of retaliation, a pattern also described in some individual interviews (box 1).

It is also believed that several former combatants who had demobilized after the peace accords in 1999 later offered their services to local commanders and joined the Ninja Nsilulu ranks between 1999 and 2004. Interestingly, the base of the Nsilulu militia was initially composed of former patients in Brazzaville’s psychiatric hospital along with members of magic and religious cults. The psychiatric patients, after being released from the hospital without being cured, had been regrouped by Ntumi before the 1997 war in the Kinsoudi district of western Brazzaville, where they were said to have received successful treatments for their mental illnesses (Ngodi, 2009).

Ninja and Nsilulu merged in 1999 when the Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR) was created. The CNR brought together all opposition movements active in the Pool region and the Grand Niari at that period but was not yet recognized as a political faction. The armed branch of this movement was the Forces d’Autodéfense de la Résistance (FADR), of which Ntumi was appointed leader. Local recruits added to the diversity of group and gradually strengthened the movement.

There are several stories surrounding Ntumi’s background. The most common one is that he fled Brazzaville’s fighting with his patients in 1997 and sought refuge in Vinza, a locality in the northern Pool region where he ordered his patients to join the remnants of Kolélas’ militias and to be trained as guerrillas.

Currently, there is little information available on how these groups functioned. The armed movement seems to have taken the form of semi-autonomous militias, which varied greatly across localities. In this research, such groups are referred to as the “free-riding elements” of the Ninjas. For example, an ex-Ninja commander interviewed in Linzolo revealed that in 1999, the armed elements posted under his command in Linzolo did not receive any food supplies and had to cope by themselves.\(^11\) As a commander, he was paid CFA 5,000 per week (the equivalent of US$10) until the peace agreement was signed in December 1999. After that, he was transferred to the Presidential service for a few months, where he was paid like a RoC soldier.

Beginning in 2003, the insurgents’ chain of command appears loose in certain localities, probably reflecting the increased financial stake. An informal agreement between Ntumi and Sassou-Nguesso empowered the Ninjas to run security on trains and in train stations, which opened the door to abusive financial demands. Additionally, Ntumi faced increasing difficulty in controlling the most extreme free-riding elements.

\(^9\) The region of the Grand Niari was also subject to the same type of purges at the same period. See the works of Patrice Yengo for more information on the 1993-2002 period (Yengo, 2006).

\(^10\) The name Bintsamou also appears in some writings.

\(^11\) Native of Linzolo, he was appointed chef d'écurie there during the 1998-99 events. He had 180 people under his command, of whom thirty female combatants (this is worth mentioning since it gives an idea of the proportion of female fighters in a given faction). Relations with the civilian population were relatively good.
We met A. in Voula in May 2011. He had come there in 2004, because he had some friends in the area. A. is a former Kolélas recruit. He first entered the Ninja movement in Brazzaville in 1993 when he was 19. At that time, he was an apprentice in a welding workshop and had completed some education (BEPC). Several factors led to his enlistment in 1993 including the closure of his workshop when violence started in Brazzaville and an incident in which he was molested by the Cocoyes (the militia loyal to Lissouba, Kolélas’ political opponent). Between 1993 and 1997, A. had to flee Brazzaville because Lissouba’s militias were hunting down the Ninjas. He moved to Massembo-Loubaki, the village of his father, in the Pool region. There he started a small business and sold medicine.

In 1997, he had to flee again, this time from the national army. He lived in hiding close to Massembo for a year. In 1998, he decided to join Ntumi. As he put it, “any young person in Massembo who resembled me was being threatened by the army.” He fought on the Mindouli front and stayed with Ntumi until the 1999 peace accords. After the agreement, he remembers the Reverend telling the Ninjas to stop direct fighting against the national army. Ntumi did not call for demobilization but asked for ceasefire and sent a clear order to avoid direct confrontation. A. could not return to Massembo because the town was occupied by Angolese forces allied with the national army, from whom he feared retaliation. He moved with a few friends to Kindabangoui, a locality in the district of Mindouli.

In November 1999, he and three others were caught in Kindabangoui by Angolese troops. Two were killed in front of him, and he was tortured. The Angolese kept him to help them liaise with the local population (the Angolese were only able to speak Portuguese and had difficulties communicating with the Congolese). A. stayed with them for several months before being released.

After he was set free, he returned to Brazzaville, where he experienced a period of relative calm. From 2000-04 he married and had three children. However, he was constantly harassed by the soldiers in Brazzaville. He also mentioned several disappearances among the former Ninjas. In 2004, he decided to leave Brazzaville for Voula, where he had friends who remained active in the Ninja movement. He has lived there ever since. Recently, his first wife arrived and told him that it was his turn to raise their children. The two children he had with his spouse in Brazzaville are now living with him and go to school in Kinkala.

Source: Fieldwork, Voula, May 2011.

### 3. From an armed movement to a political party

A turn in the development of the Ninja movement came in April 2007 when the CNR and the government signed an agreement to end hostilities. The FADR, CNR’s armed branch, was dissolved, and in preparation for the upcoming legislative elections, the CNR became a political party, switching its name from the Conseil National de la Résistance to the Conseil National des Républicains (Amnesty International, 2008; 2010).

As part of the April 2007 agreement, Ntumi was appointed Délégué Général chargé de la promotion des valeurs de paix et de la réparation des séquelles de guerre (general representative for promotion of peace and reparation of the effects of war) by presidential decree. He did not take up his position until December 2009, however, citing the lack of guarantee to his personal security and some logistical issues related to personal and professional housing.

For many years, Ntumi denounced the failure to implement measures from the 1999 and 2003 peace agreements. Those measures included large-scale arms collection from all sides, demobilization of all militias, the restructuring of armed groups, integration of former militias in the national army, recognition of the CNR as a political faction, and a joint security management system in the localities of the Pool most

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**Box 1 – 1993-2011: The trajectory of an ex-combatant**

We met A. in Voula in May 2011. He had come there in 2004, because he had some friends in the area. A. is a former Kolélas recruit. He first entered the Ninja movement in Brazzaville in 1993 when he was 19. At that time, he was an apprentice in a welding workshop and had completed some education (BEPC). Several factors led to his enlistment in 1993 including the closure of his workshop when violence started in Brazzaville and an incident in which he was molested by the Cocoyes (the militia loyal to Lissouba, Kolélas’ political opponent). Between 1993 and 1997, A. had to flee Brazzaville because Lissouba’s militias were hunting down the Ninjas. He moved to Massembo-Loubaki, the village of his father, in the Pool region. There he started a small business and sold medicine.

In 1997, he had to flee again, this time from the national army. He lived in hiding close to Massembo for a year. In 1998, he decided to join Ntumi. As he put it, “any young person in Massembo who resembled me was being threatened by the army.” He fought on the Mindouli front and stayed with Ntumi until the 1999 peace accords. After the agreement, he remembers the Reverend telling the Ninjas to stop direct fighting against the national army. Ntumi did not call for demobilization but asked for ceasefire and sent a clear order to avoid direct confrontation. A. could not return to Massembo because the town was occupied by Angolese forces allied with the national army, from whom he feared retaliation. He moved with a few friends to Kindabangoui, a locality in the district of Mindouli.

In November 1999, he and three others were caught in Kindabangoui by Angolese troops. Two were killed in front of him, and he was tortured. The Angolese kept him to help them liaise with the local population (the Angolese were only able to speak Portuguese and had difficulties communicating with the Congolese). A. stayed with them for several months before being released.

After he was set free, he returned to Brazzaville, where he experienced a period of relative calm. From 2000-04 he married and had three children. However, he was constantly harassed by the soldiers in Brazzaville. He also mentioned several disappearances among the former Ninjas. In 2004, he decided to leave Brazzaville for Voula, where he had friends who remained active in the Ninja movement. He has lived there ever since. Recently, his first wife arrived and told him that it was his turn to raise their children. The two children he had with his spouse in Brazzaville are now living with him and go to school in Kinkala.

Source: Fieldwork, Voula, May 2011.

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12 Ntumi and his supporters had tried to enter Brazzaville in September 2007 but were impeded by government forces, which forced the CNR delegation back into the Pool region (Jeune Afrique, 2010).
affected by residual violence. In May 2011, when the fieldwork for this report was completed, the last point was highlighted during the discussions with Ntumi, his political advisors, and some of the ex-combatants we met, since joint security teams had once been used in RoC after the signing of the 1999 ceasefire. In 1999 and 2000, former militias were paired with representatives of the public security forces in the Pool region to ensure the security of the populations. In their minds, Operations KINZOUNOU and KIMIA of 2010 were all the more “negative,” since they were “one-sided” operations.

The last Congolese legislative elections were in 2007, except in the district of Mindouli, where elections were delayed until 2010 because of residual security problems. Nearly all opposition parties boycotted the elections on the grounds of a lack of transparency, as the government had ignored several calls to create an independent electoral commission. After some hesitation, the CNR eventually participated in the elections in the Pool region, putting forward six candidates, including Ntumi, but won no seats. Pro-government parties won 125 out of 137 seats in the National Assembly. The elections were criticized both internally and internationally for their many irregularities.

In several localities, focus groups participants pointed out that Ntumi had toured the region in recent years, either in pre-electoral times to foster the CNR as a new political party, or to preach. The localities of Kinkala, Matoumbou, Madzia, Ngoma Tsé Tsé, Missafou, Massembo Loubaki, and Loutéhété hosted permanent CNR representatives. By contrast, Boko, Louingui, Linzolo, and Voula—the other localities visited for the study—hosted no permanent representative. The sous-préfet of Louingui mentioned that Ntumi had visited the locality a few times in recent years before elections and for preaching purposes. In other localities, however, such as Linzolo and Boko, Ntumi had never set foot.

In 2010, legislative elections were held in the district of Mindouli, and Ntumi appeared to be a serious challenger. However, the CNR did not win the seat. He, his political advisors, and the local consulting team suggested that the CNR defeat was mainly due to the late arrival of a third candidate who registered after the electoral deadline and eventually allied with the Presidential party.

The 2009 presidential elections were as opaque as the preceding elections in 2002. The government again rejected calls to establish an independent electoral commission, and the existing National Commission on Elections disqualified four of the main opposition candidates. This led several other political factions to boycott the elections. Sassou-Nguesso was re-elected by a large majority and quickly made major cabinet changes after the election, one of which was to do away with the office of the Prime Minister.

In the localities visited for the study, the recent electoral deadlines caused a variety of reactions. For instance, the presidential election triggered violence in Voula on the part of the remaining combatants, though it did not lead to violence in the other localities.

An interesting indicator for assessing the extent of Ntumi’s popularity is the evolution of his personal guard when traveling outside Soumona. When his personal car was spotted in Kinkala during the fieldwork (at that time the town was hosting a three-day meeting for the local councilors of the Pool region, of whom Ntumi is one) his military escort was composed of only one armed man guarding his car, which was minimal compared to previous outings. According to the local consulting team, Ntumi used much more protection and had a much bigger personal guard a few years ago.

Focus group participants were asked if they expected a resumption of war. Participants in Kinkala and Matoumbou said that they were not worried about such an event, especially since at the end of the war Ntumi had made several declarations denouncing any intention to return to fighting. According to an ex-combatant close to Ntumi, “If it has to happen again, another Ntumi will rise.” Despite the persistence of some uncoordinated free-riding elements, a resumption of violence in the Pool seems unlikely at the moment.

4. The spiritual dimension

Several writings have highlighted the religious character of the Nsilulu movement and the practices of
Ntumi’s followers. Most describe their lifestyle as ascetic. Ngodi (2009) listed some of the Nsilulu’s symbolic taboos: smoking cigarettes or cannabis, washing themselves naked, drinking alcohol except for red wine, washing more than once a week, wearing red or black, touching cassava after drinking water, urinating against a tree, drinking water after 18:00, eating while standing, and wearing fétiche to go to the frontline. They also had to flee the rain, and menstruating women could not cook for them. Furthermore, the Nsilulus had many taboos related to food: they were prohibited to eat cassava on Wednesdays, looted meat, bats, snakes, or any food cooked and sold at the market. In the early stages of the insurgency, it was reported that the Nsilulu sometimes forced their prisoners and the population in the area under their control to attend Thursday prayer, killing all who disobeyed (Crime, Law and Social Change, 2001).

Until recently, the Nsilulu were easily identifiable, since they all wore dreadlocks and purple pieces of clothing, purple being the color of St. Michel. Ntumi derived a large part of his popular legitimacy by stating that he was a messenger of God and that St. Michel had asked him to gather the troops spread in the forests to lead the insurgency.

The spiritual side of the movement seems to have evolved since the early days. In May 2011, only three of the ex-combatants met wore dreadlocks. One of them, met in Ngoma Tsé-Tsé, explained that they had received instructions to stop the practice, and that in Brazzaville, police had started to harass rastas (members of the rastafari movements), even if they had never been part of the Nsilulu movement. Only in Missafou did we witness the remnants of a purple flag at the entrance of a former Ninja leader compound, the home of Ntumi’s brothers. Ex-combatants no longer dressed in rags and were instead in line with the local dress code.

Although Ntumi continues to preach in Pentecostal churches, prayers are no longer compulsory. Ntumi continues to have religious followers. Some of the ex-combatants interviewed in Voula and Kinkala, which are relatively close to Soumona, said that they sometimes go there to hear his sermons. Others have different faiths, but this is not seen as an issue. Some ex-combatants still contribute to the church. For example, an ex-combatant met in Brazzaville, mentioned in an individual interview that he sometimes gives the dime—a kind of tithe—to the Church when he earns something.
One of the main characteristics of the Pool region since 1998 has been the lack of public security forces. With the exception of a few localities—Kinkala, Boko, and Louingui—the police and gendarmerie corps left the area in 1998 when the first wave of violence shook the region. They did not come back until the start of Operation KIMIA at the end of 2010. This permitted many abuses by armed groups, some of which are reported below.

Another characteristic of the Pool region rarely mentioned in institutional reports is that Ninja bases have persisted in certain localities—Madzia, Matoumbou, Voula, Kibouendé, and Missafou—until recently, posing a direct threat to the local population. Outside the political evolution of the armed movement, some localities were still held hostage by free-riding Ninja commanders seven years after the last wave of violence in the region in 2002-03. These commanders generally appeared detached from any chain of command and seemed to pursue personal gain. This section provides several examples of such situations.

1. The diversity of local security situations in the Pool region

Localities in the Pool region have been affected very differently by the war, even during its worst phases. Two periods of open war can be identified: 1998-99 and 2002-03. The second period of open war was followed by a period of more diffuse violence during 2003-10. A clear finding of the focus groups was the striking regional variation in the violence experienced by different localities during this period.

Different experiences during periods of open war: 1998-99 and 2002-03

Kinkala, like the villages of Linzolo and Louingui, experienced open war in 1998-99, but not in 2002-03, when other nearby localities were affected by the resumption of violence. Focus group participants in Kinkala recalled that the Ninjas first attacked the town in October 1998 but were rapidly pushed back by the national army. Kinkala was empty for approximately two weeks before the population returned.

Kinkala was attacked again in December 1998. This time the Ninjas defeated the army and established a base in Kinkala for six months until the peace agreement was signed in May 1999. During that period, most of the population was living hidden in the bush, but some individuals and families politically close to the Mouvement Congolais pour la Démocratie et le Développement Intégral (MCDDI, Kolélas’ political party) remained in town. The interviewees stated that during the Ninja occupation, several youth from Kinkala joined the Ninjas; some were driven by genuine interest, others were coerced. When the national army re-entered Kinkala in May 1999, the population in the bush was asked to repopulate the town. The army delivered *laisser-passer* to the ones who did so in an attempt to keep control of entries and exits. However, many arbitrary arrests and killings occurred in the beginning. In particular, the local youth were

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14 We leave out the events of 1993 and 1997 which, although linked when analyzing the chronology of conflict from a political angle, were more targeted at Brazzaville.

15 The *laisser-passer* was an entry/exit control document, which was issued by the national army to returning residents.
often suspected of being Ninjas and were particularly at risk of retaliation. The interviewees pointed out that because of this many people chose to relocate elsewhere or to send at-risk family members to alternate locations as precautionary measures.

The village of Matoumbou, remotely located seven kilometers from Kinkala, experienced open war in 1998. The village emptied completely after it was bombed by a helicopter in April 2002. Kinkala was the closest urban center and became an obvious destination for Matoumbou’s displaced population. The displaced population also experienced arbitrary violence and retaliatory behavior. In Kinkala, members of the focus group recalled a tragic event in which forty of the displaced youth from Matoumbou disappeared after arriving in Kinkala. The locals believe that they were all killed by an army commander who had ostensibly labeled them “Ninjas”.

In April and May of 2002, shortly after the February presidential elections, combat operations between the national army and the Ninjas resumed in certain localities. Some localities—Boko Center, Louingui Center, and Linzolo—remained unoccupied, but Ninja activity in surrounding towns and villages impeded people’s ability to access their fields.

The villages of Masembo-Loubaki and Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare were greatly affected by the events of 2002-03. Houses in Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare were left unscathed by the 1998-99 fighting, but many homes were burned down in 2002, when the population left due to fighting in the village. From the focus group, we learned that many of the displaced households remain squatters in an empty area in Kinsoundi, the closest town on the main road in the Ngoma Tsé Tsé district. They regularly commute to the village to work in their fields for a couple of days at a time. The resumption of economic activities in Ngoma Tsé Tsé Gare has been slow since 2003 and has likely been hampered by its remote location. Currently, there are not enough businesses in the village to provide regular and sufficient supplies. Therefore, the population that remains must go to Brazzaville regularly to bring back what it needs.

In Masembo-Loubaki, the focus group described this period as “village destruction.” The local understanding of the situation was that combat resumed there because the government had disrespected the agreement to integrate ex-combatants into the national army. As retaliation for starting the uprising, Massembo-Loubaki was completely destroyed. “Even the fruit trees were cut down.”

While the initial Ninja movement of 1998-2002 was primarily seen as a popular uprising in the northern districts (emerging in response to the myriad abuses against civilians caused by the public security forces in the Pool region in 1997-1998), the southern districts (Boko, Loumo, Louingui) saw the Ninja phenomenon as an invasion. In Boko, the civilian population assisted the national army in pushing back the Ninjas from their zones in 2002-03. Some were temporarily armed and deployed in the southern districts. The resurgence of violence was quickly tamed in 2003, and the area has not experienced Ninja activity since then.

The period of diffuse violence and “fixed” Ninja bases: 2003-10

Open fighting between the Ninjas and the national army officially stopped in 2003. Nevertheless, the Ninjas have until recently continued to occupy several strategic locations in the Pool region—the districts of Mindouli, Kindamba, Vinza, and Mayama, as well as in the district of Kinkala, including the visited sites of Matoumbou, Madzia, Missafou, and Voula. Focus groups reported that these Ninja bases were a major source of abuse against civilians. Many of these bases were finally disbanded in mid-2010.

Control over key infrastructure and compulsory taxation occurred through several channels. In places located on the railroad Chemin de Fer Congo Océan (CFCO), the Ninja’s ensured train security until 2009-10 as the result of an informal political agreement, which became pretext for abusive taxation. Ninja elements also had a monopoly on providing security for the mobile phone antenna stations (airtel, MTN).

16 Focus group, May 2011.
17 It is worth noting here that one of the events that triggered the 1998 insurgency was the arbitrary killing on 9 October 1998 of 22 civilians by representatives of the national army in the locality. This event, combined with similar cases of abuses perpetrated by FAC elements in the Pool region, fueled a popular movement of revolt. Since a lot of Masembo’s inhabitants joined the Ninja movement in 1998 to end the arbitrary harassment by the public security forces, the quasi destruction of the locality sent a strong sign to the insurgents.
18 The southern districts of the Pool region are mainly composed of Lari while the other districts in the Pool are primarily Laris.
19 Some ex-combatants continue to provide security for the stations, but it is no longer their monopoly. They once had complete control, but now they are employed like other civilians.
Furthermore, Ninjas commonly provided compulsory escorts to trucks carrying merchandise (especially charcoal freight). Racketeering was also common, taking the form of checkpoints on main roads (locally called bouchons), especially on the Route Nationale 1 (RN1), the main road linking Brazzaville to Kinkala. The practice was put to an end in Voula when the road was paved in 2008. There was also regular racketeering of the local residents. In the towns of Voula, Missafou, and Matoumbou, Ninjas demanded heavy fines for no apparent reason, and the people had no choice but to pay if they did not have enough money themselves, they had to find ways to borrow some. Forced labor was also a problem in some places, such as Madzia and Missafou. Finally, excessive taxation on safou (a tropical fruit) and other agricultural products was reported in several localities.

Matoumbou was located in the “red zone” until recently. It experienced the 1998-99 war, was bombed in 2002, and was home to a particularly violent Ninja group between 2003 and 2010.

The situation in Voula was similar. The village was strategically located on the RN1. Until 2008, Ninjas collected compulsory taxes at checkpoints from passers-by and trucks. Focus group participants reported various incidents, such as one in 2004, when Ninjas tied up nine residents and burned their feet. According to the assembly, they wanted to burn them alive on the grounds of alleged witchcraft. On request of the village chief, the sous-préfet from Kinkala intervened and paid the Ninjas CFA 60,000 (US$125) to release the prisoners.

Another noteworthy incident happened in 2009 when the Ninjas forbade the population from voting in the presidential elections. On the day of the election, they burned all the ballot boxes under the pretext that the electoral register did not match the current locality register (the 2002 version was then used). The same day, a woman was gang raped, and thirty people, including several members of pro-government political parties, were forced to leave home for several weeks. The interviewees also stressed that the Ninjas intervened in routine disputes, bypassing the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. For instance, when there was a dispute between two village residents, the individuals had to settle their accounts with the Ninjas in addition going through the chefferie (the local traditional authority). At times they were forced to pay heavy fines which, according to the testimonies received, could vary between CFA 50,000 and CFA 300,000—quite significant by local standards. If they did not have the money, they had to find a way to borrow it.

Between 2004 and 2007, no less than four armed groups with 900 Ninjas were spread throughout Missafou, an important train station on the CFCO railroad in the district of Mindouli. These groups gradually diminished after 2007. Focus group participants discussed the many abuses committed by these individuals during that period, including attacks on trains and trucks, physical harassment, excessive taxation on safou, forced labor, non-authorized use of land, kidnapping, and heavy fines. The population was defenseless. It is reported that even the locals in Missafou, who had been drawn into the armed movement, were committing abuses. Ntumi sent his brother and a few other trustworthy men to Missafou in 2005 to try
to restore order by taming the free riding elements, but not all abuses stopped. For instance, attacks on trains continued until the start of the military operation in the Pool in 2010, as did unauthorized land cultivation whereby Ninjas exploited land without the land owner’s permission. Right before the deployment of Operation KINZOUNOU in 2010, about 400 Ninjas still remained in Missafou. Most fled when the military arrived, yet it is estimated that about 100 stayed, including some natives of Missafou. Those who stayed are said to be generally accepted by the population.\(^{20}\)

A few areas that had a Ninja post until recently, such as the village of Massembo-Loubaki in the district of Mindouli, were managed by a commander who was from the locality. That was also the case in Linzolo during the period of open war in 1998-99. In those cases, abuses by the Ninjas were much rarer, with the exception of sporadic attacks by uncontrolled elements. In Massembo-Loubaki, the Ninja base was located in the village until 2004, when it was replaced by one outside the village.

Recently, some of the problematic Ninja bases in the districts of Kinkala and Mindouli have been dismantled. This is the result of several factors, including general frustration amongst the population, the 2009 disarmament operation, and the deployment in 2010 of two successive military operations—Operation KINZOUNOU, which ran from May to October, and Operation KIMIA, which commenced in October. For instance, in Matoumbou, following another train robbery and kidnapping, but prior to the military operation, the chefferie decided to rid the town of the Ninja base that had been abusing the town for seven years. Between 200 and 300 youths from Matoumbou were armed and summarily negotiated the Ninjas’ departure. According to the focus group participants, the talks lasted about a month. Sometimes, the groups exchanged fire, but eventually the Ninjas left. At the time of the interviews, only five ex-combatants remained in Matoumbou out of an écurie\(^{21}\) of 100. All five seemed to be socially accepted.

2. **The recent military response by the State (2010 to date)**

Between June and September 2010, Operation KINZOUNOU was deployed in the Pool region to secure the Kinkala-Mindouli axis for the July legislative elections in Mindouli and the August independence ceremony. The operation was based in Kinkala and conducted mobile patrols between Kinkala and Mindouli.

In October–November 2010, Operation KIMIA was deployed to restore security in the Pool region and to reinstall the public security forces and administrative authorities. The operation was composed of elements of three corps: gendarmerie, police, and national army. Several fixed stations were established throughout localities. They were temporarily given authority over settling civil disputes, thereby reinstalling a judicial system in the Pool region that had been missing for more than a decade. Since the start of these operations, the military has ensured the security of all trains (passengers and freight), a task formerly monopolized by the Ninjas. Operation KIMIA has also collected weapons from ex-combatants, although this was not its primary objective (see part 5, section 1).

Both operations were generally well-perceived by the population, who saw them as a positive shift to get rid of the oppressive Ninja groups and as an end to the pervasive climate of impunity in the region. As soon as the military operation was deployed in Kinkala, for instance, locals from Voula visited Kinkala many times to ask military and administrative authorities to free their village. Focus group participants recalled that the Ninja group shrank from 50 members in 2009 to 30 in 2010. It presently comprises only eight to ten members, including two or three natives of Voula.\(^{22}\)

The community members interviewed said that they wanted Ninjas from outside Voula to leave, while those former Ninjas who were natives of Voula could stay. A few days before the focus group was held, the community had organized a march and had formally requested that the Ninjas leave. About 20 ex-combatants left the village at that time. Some moved close by, mostly in hiding, while some moved farther away. Their leader, Tex Wiler, has not been seen since March 2011. The community believes he sought refuge at

\(^{20}\) Focus group Missafou, May 2011.

\(^{21}\) An écurie designates a Ninja commander and his elements. In some locations, there was only one écurie, as in Matoumbou and Voula. In other locations, there were several – there were three in Kibouendé and four in Missafou.

\(^{22}\) According to the group interviewed, there were about three hundred Ninjas when the base was set up in 2002. The number decreased in 2004 with the death of its first charismatic commander, nicknamed Titus.
Ntumi’s compound in Soumona. One ex-combatant who stayed explained during an interview that he was waiting for the end of the school year before transferring his family elsewhere, as his children were enrolled in Kinkala.

Ex-combatants had diverse perspectives on the military operations. Individual interviews highlighted that some did not see them as a problem, while others feared them to the extent that they moved away as a precautionary measure. It is worth keeping in mind that the Republic of Congo has a long history of violent purges against any form of opposition, armed or not. For instance, an ex-combatant met in Brazzaville, who was a member of the group of individuals brought in by Ntumi’s directeur de cabinet, explained that while he had not been active in the movement since 2004, he felt threatened by Operation KINZO-UNOU and chose to move closer to Ntumi in Soumona for protection. He lacked the means to bring his wife and family with him and therefore left them behind in Massembo-Loubaki. He coped on his own by selling wood and visiting Massembo occasionally to work in his field. When home, he encountered the military on several occasions but was not harassed. He did, however, know of three other ex-combatants from Massembo who had been arrested and were set free only after paying a fine.

Ex-combatant selling palm oil in Loutéhété (outside the PNDDR framework)

A young ex-combatant who had spent nearly all his life in an armed movement and interviewed in Loutéhété explained his experience with Operation KIMIA. He had joined Ntumi’s movement in 2002 at the age of twelve to protect his family—his sister was particularly at risk since she was the wife of the village chief. After the ceasefire, he joined a group of thieves who roamed the surrounding area; as he put it, “we had to eat.” He left the group in early 2010, soon after Ntumi took his position in Brazzaville on December 28, 2009. After an attack on a car close to Loutéhété was reported to the army in February 2010, he said he was harassed by the soldiers of Operation KIMIA because he was known to have been part of the group of thieves. Consequently, he was suspected of being involved in the attack. When he showed the military the paperwork that proved he had sold his weapon in 2009, he was left in peace. He now grows cassava, makes charcoal, and sells medicine in the village.

During the focus group with ex-combatants conducted in Brazzaville, participants mentioned that in Missafou and Massembo-Loubaki, Operation KIMIA paid the village chiefs to denounce ex-combatants. This information corroborated other information collected from an individual interview with the former military commander in charge of Operation KIMIA in Kibouendé. Some informants were rewarded for helping to find weapons. Ex-combatants who willingly gave up their weapons were also given a small reward. The État Major in Kinkala provided the money for those rewards based on the written recommendation of the Lieutenant in charge in the locality.

In terms of security, Operations KINZOUNOU and

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23 See the works of Bazenguissa-Ganga.
24 Focus group, Missafou, May 2011.
KIMIA have had a positive influence in the localities visited. Social disorder is much less frequent now and more linked to residual banditry rather than a latent military threat. In the areas of Matoumbou and Madzia between January and August 2011, there were only two cases of attacks on vehicles (January 17 and March 16). In Missafou, where Operation KIMIA is based, the remaining ex-combatants and others who do not own land have started to pay rent for their agricultural plots. Before KIMIA, they were using the land without the permission of the land owners.

In several of the localities visited, such as Missafou and Matoumbou, the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior had recently sent delegations to identify land for the construction of the gendarmerie and police buildings. In some areas, this constitutes the first genuine sign of the re-establishment of public security forces after a 13 year absence.

It is important to recall that public security forces committed many abuses in the Pool region at the end of the 1990s and were to a great extent a trigger for the initial popular uprising in 1998. However, the picture is quite different today. With the current President facing no strong political opposition, it is unlikely that such a situation will repeat itself. The local population also seems genuinely relieved to see the return of public security forces, which is an indicator of a change in the popular attitude towards security forces. The KIMIA officer in charge in Missafou even mentioned that the military station was overwhelmed by requests for judicial help.
Part 4 – The current situation of ex-combatants

1. A diversity of profiles

The term Ninja encompasses a diversity of profiles that can be roughly categorized into ten overlapping categories:

- **Type 1: The local Ninjas**

In all the places visited, focus group participants acknowledged that local youth from their area were drawn into the Ninja movement. Their rationale for enlisting included forced conscription, desire to protect parents, self-protection, and genuine political or economic interest. These reasons are in line with previous studies that explored the profiles and motives of ex-combatants in RoC (Bazenguissa-Ganga, 1999; Yengo, 2006; Ngodi, 1999). When the Ninjas were chased by the army, most of the local youth fled with them, some out of conviction and others out of fear of being caught by the national army if they stayed. For example, in the village of Lindzolo 20 local youth followed the Ninjas in their flight; five of them returned a few years later.25

In Voula, many local youths were coerced into joining the movement in 2002.26 In Loutéhété, the focus group mentioned that most of the local youth who joined the armed movement only did so for a few weeks. Those youths were referred to as “assistants” instead of “combatants.” Others who stayed active in the movement longer apparently had no problem with the community upon return. The focus group said that all came back eventually, and that some came back in pairs. They are now regular members of the community. Some are members of a *mutuelle*,27 while others are involved in small businesses and in local economic arrangements with other community members.28

- **Type 2: The outsiders**

In all localities visited, the Ninjas who came from outside, especially from the districts of Kindamba and Vinza, are said to have been more numerous than those coming from inside the locality. It is also believed that the “outsiders” were most responsible for social disorder, even if “insiders” also played a role. In certain places, such as Lindzolo and Massembo-Loubaki, the local Ninja commander was from the area, which generally minimized cases of abuse towards civilians. This was not, however, the norm. It was very clear from the focus groups that while community members were generally willing to welcome back the ex-combatants native to the locality, outsiders were asked to leave, especially after the deployment of the military operations in the Pool region in 2010.

- **Type 3: The ex-combatants still loyal to Ntumi**

Ntumi continues to entertain a certain form of paternalism from Soumona, a district of Kinkala about

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25 Focus group Lindzolo, May 2011.
26 Focus group Voula, May 2011.
27 *A mutuelle* is a community-based social association where members pay a membership fee to be able to claim some kind of social benefits in cases of funerals, long-lasting disease, etc.
28 Focus group Loutéhété, May 2011.
one hour from Brazzaville where he set up a sort of safe haven that attracts Ninjas who feel threatened by recent developments, particularly Operation KIMIA. His residence in Soumona consists of a large fenced compound that provides basic services for the population. He plans to build and equip a health center in the near future, and he sustains a patrimonial relationship with the people who surround him. During our visit to Soumona, we witnessed a person go to Ntumi’s deputy to report a death, implicitly requesting his support. We also learned that Ntumi employs many individuals as farmers in his 55-hectare cassava plantation in Vinza and that he regularly receives request from ex-combatants to support their agro-pastoral activities.

The Soumona compound has also become an ideal place for hiding ex-combatants on the run. There are rumors that some find sanctuary there when they are harassed or fear harassment by the military. We met one ex-combatant in Brazzaville who had been demobilized since 2004 but had recently joined Ntumi for fear of retaliation by the military. Ntumi’s deputy also mentioned the example of 50 ex-combatants who had each received a communication requesting that they report to the military immediately following the deployment of Operation KIMIA. They then approached Ntumi for advice, and Ntumi’s response was to inform the national army État Major it was out of the question that these ex-combatants would report.29

Notwithstanding such examples of protection, it has also been reported that Ntumi handed over known criminals to the military.30 Therefore, it is likely that the most dangerous free-riding elements have sought refuge elsewhere or have directly negotiated their conditions with the local commanders of Operation KIMIA.31 If this is the case, Ntumi and his Soumona compound may be used more as a buffer against real or perceived threats to some ex-combatants. (See part 3, section 3 for concrete examples about the extent of ex-combatants socioeconomic reintegration.)

- **Type 4: The self-demobilized with no links to Ntumi**

We met several individuals, including former écurie commanders, who had self-demobilized and retained no links to Ntumi. Some of these had clearly lost the taste for war, while others were disillusioned and were tired of feeling manipulated by their leadership. One former commander of Linzolo implied that he might take a well-paid opportunity as a military commander if it emerged. However, his comment must be put into context to avoid giving the impression that the Congolese situation is still potentially explosive. This particular former commander was a Kolélas recruit from 1993; he joined Ntumi’s ranks near Vinza, when he was fleeing the Cobras’ violent purges, and his comment was more likely linked to his personal trajectory than to a possible resumption of war. Between 1993 and 2003, he changed sides many times, not by betrayal but due to changing alliances. At the time, loyalty then seemed fluid and opportunistic.

During his time with Kolélas (1993–1997), he was given CFA 1,000 per day to serve in the militias. He said that he regularly sent part of the money to his mother. In 1997, with Kolélas joining Sassou Nguesso, he spent a few months in the government army, where he received free food and a daily wage of CFA 1,500. Shortly after the presidential elections, however, his former military chiefs were murdered in the military camp, so he fled north with 70 comrades and went into hiding in the district of Kindamba. There, he was only three kilometers from Ntumi, and joining the Nsilulu therefore appeared to be the most logical move. When Ntumi signed the peace agreement in 1999, the former commander was again transferred to the President’s service, in which he spent five months in a military camp and was paid like a regular soldier.

At the military camp, he was offered several opportunities to conduct secret military operations, but he refused most of them so as not to upset Ntumi. In 2003, tired of feeling manipulated by both sides and having little to show for it, he self-demobilized and went back to Linzolo, his mother’s village. Although Ntumi sent people after him to ask why he had left, he was not pressured to come back.

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29 It would be worth exploring what has become of the Ninjas recently evicted from localities where abuses lasted until recently – Matoubou, Madzia, Voula, and Missafou. The situation is difficult to gauge. Perhaps it is right to assume that within this group, some self-demobilized and settled down somewhere, such as in Brazzaville or Pointe Noire, in an anonymous place, or in their locality of origin. Some might also have chosen to join Ntumi’s close network in Soumona or Brazzaville.

30 Interview with Ntumi’s directeur de cabinet, May 2011.

31 Individual interview with the former KIMIA commander of Kibouendé, May 2011.
- **Type 5: The high and mid-ranking commanders**

Some former Ninjas were placed in the national army throughout the phases of military absorption (these phases are detailed in the fourth section). Others were placed in the administration. The ex-military commander of Ngoma-Tsé Tsé, a former Kolélas commander who joined Ntumi in 1999 and again in 2002, was recently appointed Conseiller Départemental of Ngoma-Tsé Tsé. A few mid-ranking commanders are said to have become dissidents and no longer consider themselves Ntumi’s followers. In the district of Mindouli, for example, the CARITAS team in charge of collecting quantitative information on ex-combatants encountered such a free-riding commander—Pasteur Finition—in March 2011.

- **Type 6: The low-ranking recruits**

The bulk of the respondents interviewed during the qualitative data collection phase were low-ranking recruits. Through these interviews, it became clear that the recruit base had eroded significantly. In Voula, community members explained that the number of recruits decreased from 300 in 2002 to approximately 50 in 2010. In May 2011, when we visited Voula, only eight to ten were left. In Missafou, the number of recruits fell from 900 in 2004 to 300 in 2007, followed by a gradual decrease, and then a sharp decrease after the deployment of the Operation KIMIA.

- **Type 7: The early-joiners**

We met several individuals who had been drawn into the Ninjas in 1993 when political exploitation of civilians was widespread. At the time, political parties were arming the youth, who later decided to rally around Ntumi (see the earlier examples of Voula and Linzolo). Most joined due to fears of political retaliation and the purges that followed the events of 1993–94, 1997, and 1999. Some demobilized in 1999, others in 2003, and still others have continued to do so until recently. Many followed a similar pattern: they self-demobilized in 1997 and returned to civilian life for awhile but then mobilized again because they felt directly threatened by the violence against former Ninjas in Brazzaville. Even those no longer active in the movement feared for their lives due to the prevalence of violence. In the words of one ex-combatant met in Brazzaville: “We were chased by the government, hence to continue to be free, we had to continue in an armed movement.”32 The same scenario happened between 1999–2002. As a result, some ex-combatants who had returned to civilian life, especially those who were living in Brazzaville, once again felt the need to go on the run. Some early-joiners also reflected on differences when joining the movement led by Ntumi. “We had fétiches in the movement of Kolélas. We gave them up. We also gave up the chanvre (cannabis), by order of the Pastor.” They were also instructed not to conduct acts of arbitrary violence.

- **Type 8: the late-comers (les petits)**

A distinction is made at the local level between the Ninja elements who fought during the war—local references to the war refer to the periods of 1998-99 and 2002-03—and the Ninja elements who came later, often to follow their brothers. The ex-combatants in the second group are labeled les petits as described in an interview with the KIMIA commander in Matoumbou in May 2011. The implication is that they did not fight during combat operations and therefore have no popular legitimacy. In places where Ninja bases persisted until early 2010, the population was therefore all the more upset at constant harassment by les petits.

Missafou differed from other localities, as it continued to receive Ninjas between 2004 and 2010 long after combat had ended. In Matoumbou, the commander of Operation KIMIA pointed out that nearby residual crime was due to a small group of four to six bandits active around the town. According to this commander, “They did not go to the frontline, they came in later. Some are young brothers of killed Ninja commanders.”

- **Type 9: The settled ones**

The bulk of persons interviewed were settled, involved in the local socioeconomic context, and intended to stay, regardless of whether or not they were native to the area. This was especially true for the ones that had self-demobilized awhile ago33.

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32 Testimony of a 1993 recruit when reflecting on the 1999 events.
33 According to the quantitative data collected by CARITAS in March 2011, only 20% of the respondents who were engaged in an armed group in the Pool had been demobilized in the past six years. The other 80% had left the armed groups much earlier.
- Type 10: The ones not yet settled

In Voula and Brazzaville, we met a few ex-combatants who were still searching for a place to settle. This does not mean that they were socially excluded. In fact, they had developed strategies to cope with the transition, but they nevertheless lacked a personal base, which had implications in terms of access to land, food supplies, and family stability.

2. The gap between Ntumi and the base

Although Ntumi is still popular in the Pool region, his political image has suffered from developments in recent years. Some ex-combatants clearly expressed disillusionment, which they framed in very practical terms: in other words, they got nothing from their participation in the armed movement, while Ntumi did (referring to his current political status, which has allowed him to enjoy economic advantages). While some have resigned themselves to this situation, others were still hoping to gain something. Among the second group, some were ostensibly sticking to Ntumi and his Soumona or Kisoundi compound in order to get a share of any financial help that may become available for ex-combatants.

3. Integration in the local communities

The word “Ninja” was no longer used in any of the towns and villages visited. According to several focus groups, the term “ex-combatant” was only used in front of evaluation missions, and the community no longer makes this distinction. Local authorities point out other community members who have been involved in armed movements in the past for evaluation missions but only for the purpose of the meeting. In fact, Matoumbou’s village chief called for an end to the use of the term ex-combatant. To him, if the phenomenon is not mentioned, it will gradually disappear. He also pointed out that the last attacks on buses and trucks were acts of thieves and had nothing to do with past wars.

The extent of social reintegration

Socioeconomic reintegration depends on many factors. It can be fostered by an external intervention, but not necessarily by an intervention that specifically targets ex-combatants or that only focuses on reintegration. This is particularly important to keep in mind given the developed humanitarian context in the Pool region (see appendices 1 and 2, which detail current development interventions in the Pool, as well as interventions specific to ex-combatants). Socioeconomic reintegration can also occur without any external help.

Returning to the typology developed above, community processes to socially reintegrate ex-combatants native to the same community (type 1) involved forgiveness ceremonies and general advice from the local authorities. For instance, in Matoumbou, the chief mentioned that ex-combatants who had returned were advised to join a church and to display their religious faith. Although he implied during the focus group that not all ex-combatants from the locality could come back (“depending on what they did”), we learnt later from a community member that an ex-combatant who had committed many atrocities and multiple rapes during the war had returned in early 2011 and was now living in peace in the community. In Kinkala, the chefs de quartier sensitized their respective populations to accept the returning combatants. (When the Ninjas left Kinkala in May 1999, they were followed by most of the youth recruited there, although some came back in 2000 after the signing of the December 1999 peace agreement.) This appeared to be a difficult task, since arbitrary murder—sometimes involving members of the same family—had been rampant in Kinkala.

Similar sensitization efforts took place in Louingui, where the administrative authorities asked the population to accept the ex-combatants. The sensitization was conducted on several levels including through chefs de quartier, village chiefs, and church leaders. Reinsertion posed no particular problems at the time. The focus group did point out that some of the demobilized ex-combatants, such as those more prone to violence than others, had clearly belonged to a strong écurie.

Reintegrating in the village of the spouse, mother, or father was another noteworthy pattern. In Loutéhété,

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34 Ntumi’s official residence in Brazzaville is located in one of the southern districts, Kisoundi Barrage.
35 Focus group Kinkala, May 2011.
the assembly mentioned the case of an ex-combatant who settled there, as it was the village of his spouse, whom he had met in Missafou a few years earlier. The focus group participants mentioned that he was well-integrated and that he had even become President of a local economic association. In Voula, a respondent was asked to leave by the community and was planning to move his family to his father’s village as soon as the school year ended. In the meantime, he had entered into an arrangement with community members to continue to occupy a house for a few months, although he had not before asked permission. He was also renting a field from a landowner to burn charcoal.36

The perception that ex-combatants were receiving disproportionate support in comparison with other community members was present in several localities. One focus group participant said, “Being an ex-combatant is a diploma.” When asked to reflect on ex-combatants’ reintegration, focus group participants in several places—Matoumbou, Madzia, Missafou, and Ngoma Tsé Tsé—regretted that all the attention so far had been focused on ex-combatants. They noted that several villages had literally disappeared during the war and that nothing had been done to repopulate them. For example, much of the displaced population of Ngoma Tsé Tsé still squats in a warehouse in Kinssundi and commutes there two or three days a week to work in their fields rather than living in their place of origin.

No better, no worse than non ex-combatants: the extent of economic reintegration

Since many ex-combatants stopped being actively involved in the movement several years ago, one could assume that they are deprived of economic activities and that they passively wait for reintegration. However, the ex-combatants who have settled in an area, whether or not they are native to that locality, are generally involved in several informal economic activities such as fish farming, gardening, and animal husbandry. The ex-combatants we met were generally engaged in economic activities similar to the activities of the population at large, which in the Pool region are mainly agro-pastoral activities and small retail business, both of which require similar types of input.

It would be wrong to assume that the ex-combatants who have not yet settled are socially disconnected and deprived of jobs and occasional income. Individual interviews point out that many people who live close to Ntumi in the areas surroundings Soumona and Kinsundi Barrage are also economically active, with some doing quite well. One ex-combatant interviewed in Brazzaville was regularly commuting between Soumona and Kinsundi. He told us that he was trained as a nurse before the war and had resumed his nursing activity in a private clinic in Brazzaville. He also mentioned that he owned fifteen goats in his village, probably under some tenant farming arrangement, and that he was keen on expanding his animal husbandry activities in Mindouli. The activity was not

36 Several testimonies collected in Matoumbou, Madzia, Missafou, Voula pointed out that before Operation Kimia, ex-combatants were not renting their agricultural plots; they were using them without permission.
new to him, since his father was already active in animal husbandry at the Voka farm in the Boko area.

Local economic opportunities for ex-combatants were partly shaped by whether or not they could access land and the form of that access. Land access varied widely depending on whether the ex-combatant was native to the area or not, and if so, whether or not he was a propriétaire foncier (local landowner). If he was not, access to land was regulated through rental arrangements. For agricultural plots, such arrangements were usually temporary and lasted until the harvest, with the possibility of extension for two to three additional years. Ex-combatants were sometimes able to purchase agricultural land; however, in sites where land is scarce, such as Voula and Kinkala, access to land was protected by family heads, and purchases of agricultural plots were said to be forbidden. The purchase of residential plots was commonplace in the Pool region, with prices varying depending on proximity to the fields and to the village.

We noted a local tendency to prefer working individually or with close family members. The reasons mentioned included trust, leadership issues, and the form of arrangements to access land. In Matoumbou, one respondent said, “the issue with groups is that there is always a leader, and somehow gradually, the other group members become his workers.” In Missafou, the assembly regretted the fact that external assistance is usually given to groups, while local ways of working are mainly individual with help provided by the close family. A focus group participant gave the example of fish farming. In his view, targeting groups was not ideal for such activity since what matters the most for the continuation of the activity is to target pond owners. This aspect is usually downplayed in humanitarian assistance, and contrats de bail (lease contracts) are generally insufficient to secure the use of a piece of land or a pond.

When ex-combatants formed groups, each member of the group usually cultivated his own plot, but they sporadically contributed to a common pot to cover communal needs, such as medical expenses. We met with a few groups in Boko and Massembo Loubaki whose activities include market gardening, fish farming, and charcoal.

The group working in the charcoal business split the costs for renting the field to burn the wood and for transporting the charcoal to Brazzaville. In Boko, a group leader was particularly careful not to bring on too many members. In his words: “The group is doing well. We divide all benefits in three [the group consists of himself, a family member and a non-family member]. We keep a small fund to cover medical expenses. If we sell 5,000, we put 3,000 in the pot. We use the money for family issues and that is why we cannot afford to be too many in the group.” Massembo-Loubaki had several agro-pastoral associations, the main rationale for which was that a group could produce more and that it increased the benefits to sell in Brazzaville. Massembo is located in a very remote area and transporting the agricultural products was cited as major problem.

In areas where Ninja bases have persisted until recently, community members pointed out many cases of land abuse. In Voula, for example, the focus group pointed out that when a fish farming project targeting ex-combatants was about to be implemented, the beneficiaries were squatting at ponds that were not theirs. Ultimately, the project was not implemented. In Missafou, community members underlined the fact that before the arrival of Operation KIMIA, ex-combatants were not paying rent when using agricultural land. Forced labor was also common and was mentioned in Madzia and Missafou.

The practice of métayage (tenant farming) is also widespread for animal husbandry. We interviewed several ex-combatants involved in such arrangements with community members. In Louthehété, for instance, the process was explained as follows: “Someone has an animal. Someone else is interested to breed it. He gives the owner CFA 12,500 to “co-buy” the animal, then he takes the animal and takes care of it. After birth, the number of animals born is divided in two and the profits from the sale of the female are also divided in two. The advantage for the initial owner is that he gets a source of income without taking care of the animal.” We heard similar arrangements in Missafou.

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37 The landowners are traditionally the family heads descendant of the first settlers.

38 Prices vary depending on location. In Linzolo for instance, a plot to grow cassava is rented for around 150,000 CFA francs, depending on size; renting an area to burn charcoal costs about 75,000 CFA francs for two months. In Madzia, land rental is more or less regulated at 30-35,000 CFA francs per half-hectare. In Massembo-Loubaki, the rent for a half-hectare is estimated at 25,000 CFA francs.

39 Focus groups in Kinkala, Missafou, Boko, and Matoumbou.
Ex-combatants involved in agro-pastoral activities face many of the same issues as the community at large. Transporting agricultural products to the nearest towns is a significant challenge. In some towns, such as Ngoma Tsé Tsé, even if the village is located on the railroad, trucks transport most products because there are not enough products to fill up a train car. In Massembo Loubaki, individuals from the town fill a train car about once a week with non-food items (charcoal, wood, foufou). However, focus group participants stressed that upon arrival in Brazzaville, products are heavily taxed by the different services, including the mairie and the agricultural control.

**Challenges**

Although most of the challenges faced by ex-combatants were the same as non-combatant community members, ex-combatants also faced issues unique to their group. One such issue is anonymity. When asked why they would not settle in Brazzaville to start over their life, ex-combatants living near Ntumi pointed out that as soon as a newcomer arrives in a neighborhood (usually hosted first by a relative), the chef de quartier is informed, after which the police and the population start watching him. It quickly becomes known that the newcomer once participated in warfare, and he becomes the ideal scapegoat for anything that goes wrong in the neighborhood. In the words of the ex-combatants, “It is only in Soumona that there is peace for us.”

A practical challenge faced by some ex-combatants—especially by outsiders who were recently asked to leave—is the issue of housing. Voula provided a striking example: ex-combatants who had squatted there in empty houses for many years were now asked by homeowners to leave the premises. This is an interesting example of civilian leverage. If it is usually assumed that the power im-

Focus group participants in Massembo Loubaki pointed out the extent of illiteracy among the ex-combatants. Those that were of school age during the 1998–2004 conflicts received no education, as the schools were closed for six years. Even church representatives avoided the town during that period. One of their suggestions to remedy the situation was to set up literacy classes for young adults.

Lastly, the well-established culture of patronage is, for some, difficult to break. Many ex-combatants continue to go to Ntumi reflexively every time they have a problem—perceived or real. There is also the hope of economic benefits if one stays close to the leader. An ex-combatant based in Soumona mentioned that he was called from time to time to help safely convoy trucks, as he was known to be skilled in weapons. The main disadvantage of such practice, however, is that it tends to isolate the ex-combatant from his direct family, spouses, and children, who usually stay in the village and do not commute to Soumona.

Making charcoal in Ngoma Tsé Tsé (outside of PNDDR framework)
Part 5 – Past interventions targeting ex-combatants and lessons learned

In the past fifteen years, several programs for disarming and reintegrating ex-combatants were implemented in the RoC. While most reintegration approaches in the Pool region have directly targeted former fighters, the UNDP-funded PRESJAR chose to focus from the start on the community at large (see appendix 1 for a list of these initiatives).

In December 1995, a peace treaty included official provisions for incorporating fighters who had served in the political militias into the gendarmerie and police corps. In 2000, a national Comité de Suivi de la Convention pour la Paix et la Reconstruction du Congo (Committee to Follow-Up on the Peace Convention and Congo’s Reconstruction) was set up to demobilize the bulk of the ex-combatants. However, it lacked sufficient means to have a tangible impact. Between 2000 and 2004, two externally-funded programs were implemented. The first was an IOM/UNDP disarmament and reintegration program, which was implemented between July 2000 and December 2002 and collected 11,000 small arms and provided reintegration assistance to 8,000 ex-combatants. The second was a program carried out by the national institution Haut Commissariat à la Réinsertion des Ex-Combatants (HCREC), with funding from IDA, which eventually provided reintegration assistance to 9,000 ex-combatants between 2002 and early 2005. The HCREC did not address disarmament.

When the Government of Congo approached donors in 2005 for funding for its Programme National de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (PNDDR), it was agreed that the reinsertion component would be supported by the multi-donor trust fund MDRP, funded by both IDA and other donor contributions under the framework of the Republic of Congo Emergency Reintegration program (MDRP-RCERP). In the Pool region, 1,679 former recruits who had self-demobilized several years before were assisted. They included not only former Ninjas but also militarized civilians who had assisted the Congolese army during the counterinsurgency. These beneficiaries were generally well settled at the time the program was implemented. Many were coming from the southern districts of Boko and Louingui, two districts that had no violent activity reported since 2003. The districts of Mindouli, Vinza, Kindamba, and Mayama were not reached by the PNDDR teams because they were in the “red zone.” In the Kinkala district, the localities that were chosen did not represent the most potentially explosive situations, such as those in Voula, Madzia, and Matoumbou, which were not included.

It is estimated that about 5,000 recruits continue to keep a close link with Ntumi. However, this number should be taken with caution given the estimative nature of this assessment. It is a reasonable assumption that some recruits remain active in the group and

40 Each political party using a militia was allocated a quota. The Presidential coalition received 2,000 places, the opposition 1,000.
41 It included those who had served in the various political parties’ militias (Ninja, Cocoye, and Cobra). The aim was to facilitate the integration of a number of them into the army and to collect small arms in circulation. After discharge, some of these militia members received a financial incentive of 15,000 CFA (US$ 20) but the committee generally lacked the financial means to go beyond that. Hence, the international community was approached for support.
42 The responsibility of the disarmament component was shared between UNDP and the Congolese government.
were not reached by the MDRP project.

Given the low number of ex-combatants reached in the Pool region during the MDRP program and the persistence of regional instability, the HCREC carried out a cash-for-weapons disarmament operation in the Pool in early 2009. It was only partially executed due to insufficient funding and sensitive electoral deadlines. In the summer of 2011, government funding was released for another cash-for-weapons disarmament operation.43 With regard to these interventions, it would be inaccurate to draw a strict line between disarmament and reintegration, especially since part of the disarmament money was used by ex-combatants for purposes of socioeconomic reintegration. The next sections describe the most recent operations.

1. The most recent disarmament operation (2009)

The most recent government disarmament operation was initially planned as one phase in February 2009. It was eventually complemented by a second phase in June 2009. Even with two phases, the program objectives were only partially fulfilled. The operation was jointly led by the government HCREC and the CNR, and according to the modus operandi defined in the document, “Modalités pratiques de désarmement et identification des 5,000 combattants du CNR,”44 dated January 31, 2009.

The operation had several objectives:

- To receive and identify combatants who had already returned their weapons;
- To validate the list of combatants not in possession of a weapon (not every single Ninja had a gun);
- To catalog the weapons;
- To pay the incentive, called prime frictionnelle, to each combatant who turned in a weapon;
- To deliver certificates of weapon deposit; and
- To organize the destruction of arms and to set-up the necessary written proceedings.

Seventeen locations were chosen in the Pool region to host disarmament centers: eleven along the railroad; five in the northwest of the region in the districts of Mindouli, Mayama, and Kindamba; and one in Kinkala. The first operation ran from February 19 until March 2, 2009; 2,878 weapons were gathered, of which 2,058 were PMAK guns.

Each weapon was quoted according to a weapons pricing list. For weapons outside the list, people negotiated directly at the disarmament counter. The amount of cash received therefore varied from one individual to another. A major difficulty in the operation was that there was not enough money to buy all weapons and there were not enough certificates of weapon deposit. These certificates are an important means for individuals to avoid harassment by the military. In the current military Operation KIMIA, for instance, former Ninjas who are apprehended by the FAC on suspected possession of an illegal weapon are released when they provide proof that they already have given a weapon back, unless they are well known for acts of banditry.

While one would have expected that the lack of financial means (which interrupted the weapons collection several times) would pose serious problems for local security, this was not the case. This demonstrates two things: first, that Ntumi had clearly communicated that these events were to be non-violent; and second, that the ex-combatants were keen to show their willingness to cooperate and empty their personal and collective arsenal. Many argue against the effectiveness of disarmament efforts, claiming that many of the weapons collected were rusty and unusable, and that many combatants gave up one weapon but kept another “just in case.”45 However, we lack solid empirical grounds to sustain these claims; such allegations therefore must be handled with caution.

The second disarmament phase began in June 2009. It was unfortunately put to an end before completion because of the proximity of an electoral deadline (the

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43 The HCREC actually met on May 31, 2011 with representatives of the political movement Conseil National des Républicains (CNR) and with the administrative authorities of the Pool, shortly after the Conseil Départemental gathered in Kinkala. During the meeting, the release of government funding was announced for the disarmament operation. A targeted reintegration component was also planned and a goal was set to provide reintegration support to 5,000 ex-combatants. The Pool is the only region that benefited from this operation.

44 Practical modalities for the disarmament and identification of 5,000 CNR combatants

45 Informal talks with local administrative authorities and key informants, May 2011, between UNDP and the Congolese government.
Presidential elections were held in July 2009) and the end of the government funding. It has been reported that PNDDR staff at the disarmament centers were sending ex-combatants away with the weapon they had come to deliver because of insufficient funds to buy them back.

HRCEC staff reported that during the PNDDR disarmament operation of 2009, the teams took advantage of the operation to identify former Ninjas, with the aim of implementing another reintegration program in the near future. In all, 13,000 ex-combatants in the Pool region were listed.

Most ex-combatants interviewed for this study had handed over a gun. The ex-combatants used the cash received in various ways: some used it to rent a plot to start a field of cassava; others invested in their small business; others still bought a residential parcel of land to settle down. One ex-combatant even bought a music amplifier to start a traveling music business that provides musical equipment for funerals and end-of-year village parties.

The two military operations that followed in 2010, KINZOUNOU and KIMIA, complemented the disarmament process. These also collected weapons from ex-combatants, although this was not their primary objective, and remuneration was not provided in exchange for the weapons. Understandably, this was seen by some ex-combatants and community members as breaking with past disarmament efforts. The persons interviewed for this study complained of the following cycle: the government had bought back weapons in 2009; the operation had to stop for lack of funding, and ex-combatants were asked to wait until a next round; then, in 2010, weapons were taken by force by the national army, based on local denunciations and without financial compensation.

2. The MDRP-reintegration operation in the Pool (2007-09)

As outlined above, there have been several programs over the years for reintegrating ex-combatants. The last targeted intervention, MDRP-RCERP, was implemented between 2007-09 in the Pool region after suffering many delays due to pockets of insecurity in the area.

The MDRP-RCERP was designed to support the demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration of ex-combatants, with a particular focus on special groups: children, women, and disabled individuals. It also included a community component to foster social reintegration through the rehabilitation of social infrastructure.

The general aim of the program was to create a sustainable source of income for ex-combatants. The range of options offered, either individually or in groups, included employment placement, support for micro-enterprise creation, informal technical training, and placement in labor-intensive projects.

Support could not exceed US$400 per beneficiary. Eligibility criteria to enter the MDRP-RCERP included: participation in combat operations; involvement in sustained logistical support; indication of a preference for training and/or self-employment through managing a micro-project; no involvement in labor intensive projects or in a regularly paid activity in the formal sector; and not having benefited from other reintegration assistance, such as the IOM/UNDP program, the HCREC, or the government pension scheme. Verification of eligibility status was significantly tightened compared with the earlier programs, and militia leaders, or their designees, were involved. They had to certify the dates and localities where the ex-combatant had been active and his or her current employment status.

The opaqueness of numbers posed a real challenge to evaluating the real needs of the MDRP reintegration program. Estimates ranged from 8,000 in the MDRP Regional Strategy to 41,000 in the government’s letter of demobilization policy (World Bank, 2007; 2010). Although some of these differences can be explained by the undocumented number of self-demobilizations, the lack of accurate registration and discharge...
records in the different armed militias makes an accurate estimate of ex-combatants difficult. For the MDRP, the population targeted by the PNDDR for reintegration support included three categories:

1. 6,000 former members of the *Force Publique* (to downsize the national army);
2. 5,000 combatants associated with the rebellion in the Pool region, an estimate based on an interview with the Haut Commissaire deputy; and
3. 19,000 ex-combatants who had already self-demobilized from the various militias at an earlier stage, some of whom had retained their arms, and all of whom were assumed to be in a difficult socioeconomic position.

Eventually, of the 19,000 ex-combatants who were classified as self-demobilized, 1,679 residing in the Pool region received reintegration assistance.

Individuals in the public security forces and those still mobilized in Ntumi’s group were also eligible to receive a transitional safety net payment of US$150 to cover their immediate needs after demobilization. Following a CNR suggestion, this cash safety net was transformed into an in-kind incentive for the ex-combatants close to Ntumi. The incentive comprised an individual kit of twenty roofing metal sheets to use for housing. In early 2009, 100,000 metal sheets were bought and stocked at the sous-préfet’s office in Kinkala. By the time we completed our fieldwork on May 31, 2011, the metal sheets had not yet been dispatched and remained in storage.

The 1,679 ex-combatants who received PNDDR assistance within the framework of the MDRP comprised five waves of beneficiaries. Five funding plans for micro-projects were therefore spread across 2007 and 2008 to provide financial assistance to those five waves of beneficiaries.

A large share of beneficiaries came from the southern districts and consisted of militarized populations armed by the national army to push back the Ninjas in 2002. The registration team focused on the less problematic areas in the Pool region; no PNDDR activity was undertaken in the localities with remaining Ninja bases in Matoumbou, Voula, Madzia, and Missafou, nor in the districts of Mindouli, Vinza, Kindamba, and Mayama.

Some indicators were difficult to assess objectively by the team in charge of the identification process. For instance, the criteria of “iden less” was difficult to determine in a context where people derive their income mostly from informal jobs or from seasonal agricultural activity. It also raised an obvious question: why was the program excluding “non-idle” ex-combatants? Why penalize those who, before the MDRP program was implemented, had already engaged in spontaneous income-generating activities on their own initiative?

In comparison with what the PNDDR offered in other regions, reintegration support was strikingly confined to agro-pastoral activities in the Pool region, with an almost complete absence of short-term vocational training. One can only regret that this vocational option was not developed more, despite demand (figure 1).

In practice, CFA 200,000 (the equivalent of US$400) were given to beneficiaries in two installments about one year apart. Group support comprised the aggregate of individual incentives. Financial support was less than expected because the incentive was processed through a financial institution (the MUCODEC), which captured a 10 percent transaction fee, instead of going directly to the beneficiary. Furthermore, according to ex-combatant testimonies, MUCODEC was charging CFA 13,500 to open an account and required a minimum balance of CFA 4,000. Depending on the type of account, CFA 2,000 could be deducted every time another transaction was made. This was a waste of money for many, as well as being a complex procedure since at the time the cash was distributed, the MUCODEC Kinkala was actually based in Brazzaville. All 1,679 beneficiaries had to travel to Brazzaville to cash out their incentive. Only in April 2011 was banking activity revived in Kinkala.

Several testimonies also indicate that beneficiaries simply did not understand the financial cuts. How the cash was given to the ex-combatants also left plenty of room for potential abuse on the part of the local

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46 The 19,000 self-demobilized were not eligible to receive this incentive on the grounds that they were already back in their communities, thus less likely to suffer immediate financial strife.

47 Some metal sheets were stolen in the beginning of 2011, according gendarmerie reports and interviews with Ntumi’s close advisors. Some of the thieves were arrested. Their photographs were displayed in the local gendarmerie station.
NGOs, which were in charge of accompanying the ex-combatants in the execution of their micro-projects. Boko beneficiaries pointed out that at the MUCODEC premises, the money given to the local NGO representative instead of the beneficiary. The eventual handover of the cash to the beneficiary could take place on the street or in local bars, and the beneficiary sometimes had the impression that the sum was not complete. Since the perception of abuse could derive from a general incomprehension of the financial process, we must treat these statements with caution. However, there is still a need to acknowledge that the procedure chosen for distributing the financial reintegration incentive was not the most appropriate in the Congolese context. Financial costs were high, and the process was complex, increasing the likelihood of confusion among the target population. The process was also open to abuse.

Most of the ex-combatants interviewed had handed over a gun during the cash-for-weapons operation of 2009; therefore, many of them chose not to register for the PNDDR reintegration component. Some were reluctant to register for fear of being put on a black list and facing potential retaliation. Others located in the red zones, such as a delegation of ex-combatants from Loutéhété that went to Kinkala to register with the PNDDR, were eventually not selected.

3. Lessons learned from past interventions

Firstly, it is important to note the predominance of targeted assistance to ex-combatants in reintegration programming in the Congolese context. Only recently did broader programs targeting communities begin to be implemented by UNDP and some NGOs.

Secondly, the Congolese case is a good illustration of the overlap between the disarmament and the reintegration phases. Individual interviews show that many ex-combatants who benefited from the cash-for-weapons disarmament phase of 2009 used part of the cash for reintegration purposes, with some renting agricultural plots, others investing in small businesses, and still others buying residential parcels on which they could settle. In other words, they could spend their money the way they wanted.

The idea that DDR is a linear sequence and that reinsertion/reintegration should follow the processes of disarmament and demobilization, is firmly anchored in the local political discourse and widely relayed by the local media. Although the MDRP reintegration programming eventually occurred just before the 2009 disarmament operation in the Pool region, much of the delay was due to the belief that it had to happen after the disarmament stage (political reasons delayed the disarmament phase many times).

One can only regret the undue influence of political ends on the reintegration component. In many localities of the Pool region, the reintegration phase could likely have started before 2008—perhaps under a “pi- lot” label—and could have helped alleviate tension between aggressive Ninja elements and the civilian population, especially in localities where an operational Ninja base remained. As several scholars pointed out, DDR programs do not necessarily have to start with disarmament and demobilization (Muggah, 2005; Pouligny, 2004; Specker, 2008).

48 Ex-combatant supported by the PNDDR in Louingui
49 Ex-combatant supported by the PNDDR in Louingui
1. **Summary of key points**

One of the main characteristics of the Pool region over the last thirteen years (with the exception of a few localities) has been the dearth of public security forces. This often led to abuse, especially since Ninja bases led by free-riding elements persisted in some areas until recently. These residual bases posed a number of threats to the local population, including forced labor, excessive taxation and extortion, torture, and unauthorized exploitation of land.

The different phases of warfare affected the localities visited very differently. In particular, the southern districts have been relatively calm for the past eight years, except along the railroad, where cases of abuse were reported until 2011.

It is only recently that the national army, with Operations KINZOUNOU and KIMIA, has reentered the Pool region to secure the area and reinstitute a formal judicial system. The operations were well received by the civilian populations and have been a success in dismantling the remaining Ninja bases.

Ex-combatants are not a homogeneous group and face different reintegration needs depending on individual characteristics. Those who are from the locality where they were posted are usually accepted by the community. Conversely, outsiders are more likely to be rejected (for example in Voula and Matoumbou.) The individuals who self-demobilized many years ago have generally developed coping mechanisms. Ex-combatants not yet settled face the problem of lack of housing. The ones who own agricultural land do not have to bear the rental cost of an agricultural plot. The typology developed for this study helps to put the different profiles into perspective by illustrating the diversity of ex-combatants' individual backgrounds (see part 3, section 1- A diversity of profiles).

Generally, the ex-combatants interviewed during fieldwork had engaged in economic activities, which resembled the activities of the population at large. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, they were generally no better or worse off than non-combatants.

Although an internalized culture of patronage to Ntumi remains, the resumption of war is highly unlikely. There have been many self-demobilizations in the past decade, and some of high-ranking ex-Ninja commanders were offered administrative and military positions. The political context is also not what it was in the late 1990s, when many Ninjas who fought in 1993 felt obliged to rejoin the fight for fear of violent retaliation. To date there is no opposition in the country capable of challenging the power of the current President; hence, the state has little incentive to hunt down an already weak opposition.

Some individuals continue to be involved in petty crime; however, they remain a minority. There are cases of coupeur de route (bandits attacking cars and trucks), but this has been infrequent since the deployment of the national army. One can only hope that when the military operation eventually ends, public representatives of the security forces—the gendarmerie and police—will be ready to absorb those duties.
The perception that ex-combatants were receiving a disproportionate share or support in comparison with other community members was present in several locations.

2. General recommendations

While the initial MDRP-RCERP project had made plans to reach active or formerly active ex-combatants in the Pool region (the estimated target was 5,000), the bulk of potential beneficiaries could not be reached during the implementation period due to the volatile political and security environment. This situation has raised the question of whether or not a complementary program could help bring a true closure to armed violence in the Pool region.

The Pool region has been adversely affected by warfare. The effects on the local economy continue to be visible today, hampering an economic reintegration solely based on endogenous processes.

Given the recent government initiatives to disarm former combatants and restore security in the Pool region—the two cash-for-weapons operations of 2009 and 2011 and the launch of Operation KINZOUNOU and KIMIA in 2010—and the wide participation of ex-combatants in these operations, it is recommended that the final disarmament operations are coupled with a reintegration component to accompany the current efforts of the State and to provide closure to the war-affected populations.

However, since it appears that ex-combatants are economically no better or worse off than the population at large, the approach should not be targeted exclusively towards ex-combatants. Assistance should target the youth in general, including ex-combatants but not limited to them, with a special focus on locations known to have recently hosted armed-group bases.

The general approach should be inspired by community-driven reconstruction programming, combining the decision-making and fiscal empowerment of decentralized institutions of government—that is, Mairies and Conseil Général du Pool (the town and district councils)—with participation of the local populations in questions related to program planning and implementation.

To ensure that this recommended approach can be implemented in the Pool region and that sufficient security is maintained, it is strongly recommended that the State is supported in its current activities to restore security and public order in the region. Assistance to the building and rehabilitation of public infrastructure to reinstall the gendarmerie and police stations has been absent in most localities of the Pool region since 1998; it is therefore recommended that this be available to avoid a gap between the end of Operation KIMIA and the redeployment of public security forces in the Pool region.

3. Recommended actions

- Reenergize the local economic situation and encourage economic opportunities in the Pool region as it rebuilds from the devastation of war (see appendix 3 for an overview of the pre-war and current economic sectors of the Pool region): it was clear from several focus groups that the war had destroyed important sectors of the local economy. Medium-scale agriculture and animal husbandry are particularly in need of productive investment. In Boko and Louingui, the Union des Producteurs de Fruits, which was a dynamic association of medium-scale tropical fruit plantations before the war, has not been reactivated since 2002. Doing so may be an initiative worth exploring, as individuals have not stopped growing tropical fruits, but their efforts remain small-scale, and fruits are usually grown on plots within the living compound. Local ranches—ox farms of more than 100 animals—were also completely destroyed during the successive wars. In the visited localities of Missafou and Massembo Loubaki, it was reported that large- and medium-size private farms had been looted and the cows had been eaten. The same goes for fish farming. Because of the lack of local supply, most animals are purchased from the DRC. Intervention should therefore combine support to individual farmers with support to larger farms and fishing centers, in collaboration with the Direction Départementale d’Agriculture and private medium-scale farm owners, in order to reintroduce large-scale ox and fish breeding in the area.
- Explore the possibility of equipment rental in the region: All the communities interviewed were eager to rent motorized cultivators. Unfortunately, there is currently no supply of motorized agricultural equipment in the Pool region. This might be worth exploring in collaboration with the Direction Départementale d’Agriculture at the district level and with the local churches at the local level.

- Explore ways to provide micro-credit to beneficiaries: The lack of dynamic economic sectors—exacerbated by the successive wars, enduring insecurity, and the continued isolation of the region—have all led to the population in the Pool becoming poorer and a serious lack of cash and credit for small and medium business investment. There is evidence that part of the unmonitored cash received during the cash-for-weapons program was used for reintegration purposes, and there are noted flaws of using intermediaries between the direct beneficiaries of assistance and the support institution. Therefore, the intervention should explore possibility of providing substantial credit schemes in one unique installment directly to beneficiaries to avoid repeating the operational flaws of the MDRP program. Given the local preference for working individually, proposals coming from individuals, family heads acting on behalf of the close family, and groups should be considered.

- Enhance agricultural trade by improving roads: Another challenge related to the reintegration of ex-combatants relates to the dynamics of local markets. The Pool region has extremely poor quality roads, very remote villages, and uneven accessibility for transporting products to market. A previous MDRP evaluation in 2003, Reintegration where there are no roads, electricity or water?, had already brought these points to the fore. It suggested undertaking parallel investments in strategic road infrastructure to facilitate the transportation of agricultural products and to boost the local economy. A key recommendation is to help connect the district of Mindouli to Kinkala by investing in roads between the two areas. Such road improvements would have a significant positive impact on the local economy and might even foster the return of some of the displaced population to their pre-war homes.

- Enhance literacy and promote vocational training: Many youth who joined the Ninja movements at a young age and stayed with them for many years do not know how to read or write. Therefore, in terms of education, the focus should be placed on literacy classes for out-of-school youth, a request made on several occasions by the community assemblies. Technical and vocational training should also be promoted, the latter including access to subsequent micro-credit at the end of the course to enable the participant to start a business or begin working using their new skills, whether individually, in families, or in groups.

- Target the areas close to the railroad network: Geographically, the intervention should target areas close to the railroad network in the districts of Kinkala and Mindouli, especially the localities hosting train stations, since those have been the areas particularly prone to abuse during the period of fixed Ninja bases. The districts of Kindamba, Mayama, and Vinza should also be covered by the program, since these districts are known to be where the insurgency started and where Pasteur Ntumi is reported to maintain socioeconomic links.

- Improve the housing situation in these districts: With the displacement of populations due to warfare and the burning down of many houses, several localities in these areas still have fewer inhabitants than before the war. Housing was also cited many times as a problem for non-settled combatants.

- Target the community at large: Interventions, including those for housing, which is generally a regional issue, should not focus solely...
on ex-combatants. Funding should preferably be channelled through churches, long-lasting ministries, local decentralized state institutions (such as sous-préfectures), and the Direction départementale d'Agriculture rather than through temporary institutions such as HCREC, PNDDR, and NGOs that are not based in the area of intervention. This recommendation is all the more relevant since many PNDDR and HCREC staff have already been moved elsewhere and are now posted in other administrative institutions.
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- Fiche de repérage du microprojet (HCREC)
- Fiche d’exécution financière du microprojet (HCREC)
- Fiche de suivi du diagnostic de microprojet (HCREC)
- Fiche de soumission et d’évaluation du microprojet (HCREC)
- Fiche de présentation du microprojet (HCREC)
- Brochure PNDDR ‘ex-enfants soldats et autres groupes vulnérables’
- Brochure PNDDR ‘démobilisation et réinsertion’
- Brochure PNDDR ‘prévention et règlement des conflits et violences’
- Termes de références : Délégué auprès de la Coordination départementale du Pool (HCREC)
- Termes de références : Délégué auprès du responsable départemental a la reinsertion

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## Appendix 1 — List of projects implemented in the Republic of Congo targeting ex-combatants (CDD and targeted approach)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Brief description of activities</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IOM/UNDP</td>
<td>Disarmament and Reintegration</td>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>Brazaville-Dolisie</td>
<td>ex-combatants</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDR-IDA</td>
<td>Demobilization and Reinsertion</td>
<td>2002-05</td>
<td>Pool and Brazzaville</td>
<td>ex-combatants</td>
<td>Congolese State / HCREC / World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNDDR/MDRP</td>
<td>Socioeconomic reintegration</td>
<td>2006-2009</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>ex-combatants</td>
<td>Congolese State / HCREC / World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNDDR/HCREC</td>
<td>Special operation of disarmament Purchase of weapons</td>
<td>2009 February and June</td>
<td>Pool region</td>
<td>ex-combatants</td>
<td>Congolese State / HCREC / World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESJAR</td>
<td>Economic and professional reinsertion of youth at risk</td>
<td>2007-2011</td>
<td>Pool region</td>
<td>ex-combatants and community members</td>
<td>Congolese State HCREC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation KINZOUNOU</td>
<td>Police operation aiming at restoring State sovereignty in the Pool region</td>
<td>May-Oct. 2010</td>
<td>Pool region</td>
<td>ex-combatants and community members</td>
<td>Congolese State UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation KIMIA</td>
<td>Military operation aimed at restoring State sovereignty in the Pool region includes a disarmament component (but arms are not purchased)</td>
<td>Since Oct. 2010</td>
<td>Pool region</td>
<td>ex-combatants and community members</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2 — List of development projects in the Pool region as of May 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Brief description of activities</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan Contrat État-Département</td>
<td>Development of the Pool region (multisector)</td>
<td>Every year since 2009</td>
<td>all districts in the Pool</td>
<td>all Pool residents</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan de Développement local du Pool</td>
<td>Development of the Pool region (multisector)</td>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td>all districts in the Pool</td>
<td>all Pool residents</td>
<td>District Council (Conseil Départemental du Pool) Co-funding partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo SAN</td>
<td>Support to agricultural production and husbandry Promote awareness on nutrition</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Pool region: district of Mindouli, district of Mayama, district of Kindamba, district of Vinza, district of Kimba</td>
<td>agricultural associations</td>
<td>Congolese State, FAO, WFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODER 3 (Projet de Développement Rural)</td>
<td>Technical and in-kind support to agricultural production and husbandry, including to relevant State divisions</td>
<td>2009-2014</td>
<td>3 regions: Pool, Sangha, Likouala</td>
<td>agricultural associations</td>
<td>Congolese State, FIDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDARP (Projet de Développement Agricole et de Réhabilitation des Pistes rurales)</td>
<td>Support to agricultural production and husbandry, including to relevant State divisions Rehabilitation of rural trails</td>
<td>2008-2013</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>agricultural associations</td>
<td>Congolese State, World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURAC (Projet d’Urgence de Relance et d’Appui aux Communautés)</td>
<td>Postconflict support to war-affected communities</td>
<td>2003-2008</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Congolese State, World Bank, ACTED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSA (Fonds de Soutien à l’Agriculture)</td>
<td>Credit to agricultural holders</td>
<td>Since 2006, every year</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>agricultural associations and individuals</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Development projects implemented in the Pool region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Brief description of activities</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRC (Projet de Consolidation de la Réconciliation)</td>
<td>Credit to agricultural holders</td>
<td>2009-2013</td>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>all Pool residents</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouveaux Villages Agricoles</td>
<td>Multisectorial support (income-generating activities, education, peace consolidation)</td>
<td>Since 2010</td>
<td>Pool region: district of Ngabé, Pool</td>
<td>all district residents</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADEL</td>
<td>Cassava seedlings (champ de multiplication de boutures saines de manioc) Poultry farms</td>
<td>2010-2014</td>
<td>Pool region: district of Louingui</td>
<td>agricultural associations</td>
<td>Congolese State French Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCD (Projet de Coopération Décentralisée)</td>
<td>Support to Agricultural associations Citizenship awareness</td>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>Pool region: district of Louingui district of Boko district of Loumo</td>
<td>agricultural associations and individuuals</td>
<td>District Council (Conseil Départemental du Pool) Town of Ribeauvillé, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme micro-credits</td>
<td>Revival of ox farms (through the local practice of métayage) Support to the production of ox food</td>
<td>Since 2007, every year</td>
<td>Pool region: district of Boko district of Louingui district of Kinkala district of Mindouli</td>
<td>Agropastoral associations Women entrepreneurs</td>
<td>CARITAS IPDH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of the hydroelectric dam</td>
<td>Provision of microcredit for agro pastoral activities and income-generating activities undertaken by women</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>Imboulou</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of high voltage power line</td>
<td>Dam construction and set-up of a high-power line between Imboulou and Brazzaville</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Chinese firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community radios</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of the very high voltage power line between Bouanza, Mindouli, and Brazzaville</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Mindouli Kinkala</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Congolese State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAEBASE (Projet d’appui à l’éducation de Base)</td>
<td>Community radios</td>
<td>Since 2011</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>UNDP Département Essonne, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project name</td>
<td>Brief description of activities</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Donors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. on education</td>
<td>School canteens</td>
<td>every year</td>
<td>Pool region</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>CARITAS, UNICEF, ACTED, Congolese State, IPHD, PCR, ASUDH, Conseil Départemental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme de lutte contre le SIDA</td>
<td>School rehabilitation (buildings, latrine, etc.); educational supplies; basic equipment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Congolese State / Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme de lutte contre le paludisme</td>
<td>Distribution of mosquito nets Free medical care for patients suffering from malaria</td>
<td>Since 2011</td>
<td>all Congolese regions</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>Congolese State / Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 — Economic sectors in the Pool region

Main activities in the region: animal husbandry, gardening (modern and traditional techniques), fish farming, small retail businesses, charcoal, palm oil, and wood.

By region:

Kinkala: moto taxis (called Djakartas). Focus group participants said that this activity peaked after the cas-for-weapons program in 2009, implying that many ex-combatants had embraced the activity.

Boko: medium-scale husbandry (notably the farm of Voka, a private farm where people can buy pigs and poultry) and vergers (tropical gardens).

Boko, Louingui: no charcoal seen on the road, in sharp contrast with the other Pool districts. In these two districts, the prohibition against making charcoal for commercial purposes is effectively implemented by the respective sous-préfets.

Matoumbou: possibility to rent a chain saw from a retired CFCO staff

Linzolo: river fishing (with nets and lines)

Mindouli, Missafou: in Mindouli, mines are exploited by a Chinese company for cerrusite, dioptase, plancheite, wulfenite, massive chalcocite, malachite, and cuprite. Missafou is not yet exploited, but an elder in the focus group pointed out that soil tests and exploratory work were done in 1963; however, mining was not pursued after the President was overthrown.

Mindouli: presence of a fish breeding center, jointly run by the Direction Départementale de la Pêche and private entrepreneurs. The fish are bought in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Impact of war:

Several focus groups mentioned that the war had destroyed an important sector of the local economy. In Boko and Louingui, the medium-scale tropical fruits plantations were particularly affected by the 2002–2003 conflict. The Union des Producteurs de Fruits, a very dynamic association before the war, has not been reactivated since that time. Individuals kept growing tropical fruits as small-scale crops, usually directly on plots within their living compound.

Local cattle ranches were also destroyed during the successive wars, and cows had disappeared in the places visited. In Massembo Lounaki, all the farms had been looted, and the cows had been eaten. The Loutéhété population used to buy animals at the Mpasa and Louila’s farms, near the DRC border, but these farms were looted during the war. In most localities visited, the purchase of animals was usually done in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ponds had also been targeted. In Missafou, focus groups participants pointed out that the ponds were emptied by armed groups between 2004–2007.
Appendix 4 — Focus group checklist (in French)

Informations générales sur la localité
- Depuis quand la localité existe-t-elle et par qui a-t-elle été fondée ?
- Faire un état des chefs de localité depuis 2000 en expliquant les raisons du changement de chefferie
- Carte de la localité? Quels axes la relient à quoi?
- État des lieux des communautés vivant dans la localité (personnes natives du coin/ celles qui sont natures d'ailleurs/ethnies en place (localité monoethnique/pluriethnique)? S'il y a plusieurs communautés, est ce que les communautés se mélangent (par quartier et par cas d'intermariage)
- La localité est-elle un lieu de migration? Si oui, pour quelles raisons les gens se déplacent encore aujourd'hui?
- Y-a-t-il des nouveaux venus récemment / Y-a-il des personnes qui sont parties? (prenez par exemple les 2 dernières années)
- Y-a-t-il un registre de population tenu au niveau de la localité? Comment et à quelle fréquence est-il actualisé?
- Qui sont les notables de la localité et expliquer leurs différentes attributions ?
- Y-a-t-il des groupements actifs dans la localité (des associations culturelles, ou économiques)?
- Principales activités économiques des personnes résidant dans la localité, principaux magasins, ateliers
- Jour de marché? Combien coûte-t-il de s'installer? Si la localité est un village doit-elle rendre des comptes au district?
- Combien de confessions religieuses dans la localité?
- Y-a-t-il des représentations politiques dans la localité (des représentants de partis)?
- Y-a-t-il une école publique? Y-a-t-il d'autres lieux d'apprentissage informel? (par exemple en cours du soir, ou des écoles privées, religieuses, etc.)
- Y-a-t-il un poste de santé public? Y-a-t-il des dispensaires privés dans la localité ou proche de la localité ?
- Y-a-t-il eu construction ou réhabilitation de nouvelles structures récemment?
- Y-a-t-il des personnes handicapées physiques ou mentales au village ? Dans ces personnes, certaines ont elles été handicapées par les faits de guerre, soit en combattant soit en civil ? (si le nombre n'est pas trop élevé, peut-être peut-on demander au chef si nous pouvons approcher quelques-unes de ces personnes à la suite de la réunion, des ex-combattants et des civils)
- Qui sont les propriétaires fonciers? Comment se passe l'accès à la terre dans la localité et est-ce que tout le monde a droit de transférer un lopin de terre? Tout le monde peut-il avoir accès à la terre? (vente, entente, manœuvre, transactions écrites informelles?) Les femmes peuvent-elles seules y avoir accès?
- Quel système de taxation est en place au niveau de la localité? (au niveau des résidents et des opérateurs économiques, des taxes de localité, des taxes de district)
- Y-a-t-il des représentants administratifs au niveau de la localité?
- Y-a-t-il des représentants de police et/ou gendarmerie au niveau de la localité?

Droits et devoirs
- Y-t-il certaines règles qui s'appliquent dans la localité (surtout en terme d'interdits et d'obligations, par exemple réparer la route principale en saison des pluies, nettoyer l'école de temps en temps, faire des rondes dans le village la nuit pour assurer la sécurité, etc.) Qui a fait ces règles et comment sont-elles appliquées?
- Est-ce qu’il y a des règles spéciales pour les nouveaux-venus?
- Y-a-t-il des choses que certaines personnes peuvent faire mais que d’autres personnes ne peuvent pas faire? (par exemple les jeunes, les nouveaux venus, etc.) Demander surtout en termes d’activités économiques et sociales (est-ce que tout le monde peut planter n’importe quelle culture? Est-ce que les droits et interdits diffèrent selon que les gens sont du coin ou d’ailleurs, selon leur appartenance ethnique). S’il y a des restrictions, y-a-t-il certains arrangements de fait pour s’arranger. S’il y a des restrictions mais qu’elles ne sont pas respectées, s’a-t-il des sanctions appliquées?
- Comment sont définies les classes d’âge au village? Quand est-ce qu’un jeune homme et une jeune femme devient adulte?
- Au décès d’un chef de famille, comment se passe la transmission de ces biens?

**Conflicts et violence actuels**

- Quelles sont les sources principales de conflit dans la localité (violence conjugale, accès à la terre, parole entre voisin, succession, cas de vol…)
- Quelles sont les sources principales de conflit actuel entre gens du coin et nouveaux venus (par nouveau venu, j’entends des gens qui ne sont pas natifs de la zone)?
- Y-a-t-il eu des conflits liés à l’organisation des élections de l’année dernière? Détaille
- Comment sont gérés ces conflits au niveau de la localité?
- Y-a-t-il certains problèmes qui ne peuvent pas se gérer directement au niveau de la localité?
- La chefferie tient-elle un registre des conflits qu’elle apaise?
- Faire ensemble un historique des conflits survenus dans la localité depuis les 2 dernières années ; quels sont les derniers conflits réglés par la chefferie?
- Y-a-t-il un couvre feu la nuit au niveau de la localité?
- Y-a-t-il certains axes autour de la localité qu’il est dangereux d’emprunter de jour ou de nuit?

**Fait liés à la guerre**

- Comment le village a-t-il été affecté par les guerres successives?
- Est-ce que tous les résidents d’avant-guerre qui avaient fui la guerre et qui ont survécu sont revenus au village?
- Y-a-t-il eu des jeunes de la localité qui se sont engagés dans un mouvement armé au niveau du village? Décrire ce phénomène de mobilisation. Dans quelle mesure la chefferie a joué un rôle dans cet engagement?
- Certains de ces jeunes sont-ils revenus dans la localité après les événements? A quelle période?
- D’autres jeunes militarisés se sont-ils installés dans la localité après les événements? A quelle période?
- Y-a-t-il eu des installations récentes?
- Y-a-t-il des sources de tension liées à ces retours (notamment lié à l’accès la terre, au non paiement des loyers…)? Et comment se règlent ces différents?
**Appendix 5 — Checklist for ex-combatants involved in a micro-project (in French)**

- Avez-vous été officiellement démobilisé, avez-vous été renvoyés par vos chefs, ou vous-êtes vous démo-obilisé tout seul – détailler les circonstances du désengagement
- Avez-vous reçu un quelconque support extérieur en termes de kit pour microprojet ou financier ? Dé-tailler comment ca s’est passé et détailler précisément ce que vous avez reçu
- Si oui, en quelle année était-ce ?
- Nom de l’institution qui vous a directement appuyé? (agences d’encadrement et agence internationale si connue)

**Suivi longitudinal de projets (PNDDR, IDA, OIM/PNUD)**

- Êtes-vous toujours actif dans ce microprojet et sinon, année et raisons de l’arrêt de votre participation à l’activité
- Avez-vous cotisé au départ pour compléter le montant du kit reçu ? Quel montant et pour acheter quoi?
- Combien vous rapporte cette activité ? (ou combien vous rapportait-elle quand vous étiez dedans ? revenue régulier ? saisonnier, ponctuel ?
- Avez-vous suivi une formation en matière de microprojet ?
- Si oui dans quelle activité et en quoi consistait la formation ?
- Par qui était dispensée la formation ?
- Si la formation était une formation technique, avez-vous suivi l’activité en centre de formation ou directement chez un artisan ?
- L’activité que vous faites aujourd’hui est-elle la même activité que vous faisiez juste avant la guerre ou une activité que vous aviez déjà exercé par le passé?
- État de satisfaction de la formation reçue, avez-vous des points de suggestion
- Avez-vous fait un stage pratique chez un artisan ou vous êtes-vous directement installés à votre compte?
- État de satisfaction du stage pratique éventuel et points de suggestion
- Dans l’activité où vous avez reçu un appui, vous êtes-vous finalement installés ou avez-vous décidé de faire autre chose ? (si oui, quoi ?)
- Si la personne s’est installée, préciser si elle travaille à plein temps dans cette activité ou si elle a des activités économiques parallèles.
- Préciser aussi si d’autres membres de sa famille travaillent dans son activité, soit en permanence soit par intermittence, ou si la personne a mis son activité en gérance.
- Préciser si la personne s’est installée en individuel ou en groupe ?
- La personne souhaite-t-elle continuer cette même activité ou veut-elle en changer un peu plus tard, ou déménager ailleurs ?
- Les kits individuels et collectifs étaient-il différents ?
- Vous êtes-vous installés dans la localité ou vous résidiez quand vous avez reçu l’aide, ou en avez-vous profité pour changer de localité ?

Si vous vous êtes installés en groupe :

- Préciser si les groupes étaient choisis ou forcés par l’institution ?
- Si à l’origine, les groupes étaient uniquement composés d’ex-combattants ou s’ils étaient mixtes dès
le départ.
- Si le groupe a changé dans le temps (avec des départs et de nouvelles arrivées), et les arrangements mis en place par ces groupes en termes de répartition des intrants initiaux
- Si l’il s’est ‘mixifié’ avec le temps (jusqu’à ne plus faire la distinction entre ex-combattants et autres)
- Comment divisez-vous les dividendes entre les membres du groupe (part égale, en proportion du travail effectué)?
- Si le groupe a complètement explosé, expliquer quand et pourquoi, et quels arrangements ont été pris

Si vous avez reçu de l’argent:
- Combien d’argent avez-vous reçu ?
- Par qui ?
- Quand ?
- En combien de tranches ?
- Avez-vous reçu l’intégralité de ce qui avait été promis ?
- Qu’avez-vous fait de l’argent reçu ?
- En avez-vous donne une partie à votre famille ou a vos connaissances ?
- En avez-vous donne une partie à vos chefs de guerre?
- Avez-vous investi ?
- Vous reste-t-il quelques économies?

*Regroupement spontané (essayer de saisir la dynamique dans le temps)*
- Activité du groupe et membres actuels?
- Le groupement est-il enregistré quelque part ou est-il informel ?
- Y-a-t-il une cotisation à verser ? si oui, préciser fréquence
- Y-a-t-il une caisse de groupe et si oui comment et par qui se gère la caisse ?
- Votre activité au sein du groupe ?
- Membre fondateur du groupe ?
- Actif dans le groupe depuis quand ?
- Si actif dans plusieurs groupements économiques, préciser lesquels et comment la personne repartit son temps
- Avez-vous cotisé au départ et si oui quel montant et pour acheter quoi?
- A quelles occasions y a-t-il des sorties de caisse et quand la renflouez vous ?
- Combien vous rapporte cette activité comme revenu que vous pouvez vous-même utiliser? Est-ce suffisant pour couvrir vos besoins ?
- Comment divisez-vous les dividendes entre les membres du groupe (part égale, en proportion du travail effectué)?
- Si le groupe a changé dans le temps (avec des départs et de nouvelles arrivées), quels ont été les arrangements mis en place par les membres fondateurs du groupe \ en termes de répartition des intrants initiaux ?
- À votre connaissance, y-a-t-il des ex-combattants dans votre groupe?
Appendix 6 — Checklist for individual interviews of ex-combatants (in French)

Informations générales
Nom
Sexe
Groupe ethnique
Religion
Age actuel
Lieu de naissance (localité précise)
Lieu de résidence actuel
Lieu de l’interview
Régime matrimonial (marié ? en concubinage ? avec/sans enfants à charge)

Avant guerre
- Liste et période des localités où la personne a habité depuis son enfance jusqu'à son engagement dans les groupes. Expliquer les raisons du déménagements et l’activité exercée dans chaque localité.
- Dernier lieu de résidence au moment du recrutement
- Avec qui habitiez-vous à l'époque et dans quelles conditions (maison en brique ? en ciment ?)
- Juste avant votre entrée dans la vie militaire, étiez-vous indépendant financièrement, aidiez-vous financièrement des gens de votre famille ou d'autres personnes, ou étiez-vous dépendant de certaines personnes?
- Avant la guerre, faisiez-vous partie d’un groupement culturel ou économique au niveau de la localité où vous résidiez ? d’un bureau des jeunes ?
- Avant la guerre, avez-vous été impliqué dans un conflit entre personnes (intra ou extra familial), ou avez-vous été impliqué dans une résolution de dispute ?
- Trajectoire scolaire de l'individu, depuis son enfance (décrire jusqu'à quel niveau il/elle est allée, ceux qui le supportaient en fournitures et dépenses d'habits, s'il y a eu des arrêts/reprises de scolarité, des passages dans le système éducatif informel, s'il y a eu un passage dans une école technique, raisons principales d'arrêt des études)
- Trajectoire professionnelle de l’individu, depuis son enfance jusqu'à son engagement dans les groupes armés (à partir de quel âge il/elle a commencé à travailler, à gagner de l’argent, liste des activités formelles (si applicable), informelles et d'apprentissage depuis l’enfance, liste précise des localités où la personne a travaillé, la personne a t’elle un parcours plutôt urbain, plutôt rural ou plutôt mixte avant la guerre, a-t’elle travaillé à Brazzaville, activité professionnelle au moment de l’engagement (si travaux champêtres, préciser si la personne travaille son propre champ, le champ familial ou se fait embaucher comme manœuvre), ce travail vous rapportait-il assez pour couvrir vos besoins, était-ce un travail régulier ou saisonnier, combien d’argent pouviez-vous avoir pendant une bonne période, etc.)

Dans les groupes armés
- Liste et période des localités où la personne a habité depuis son enfance jusqu'à son engagement dans les groupes armés
- Mois et année d'engagement dans le groupe armé
- Lieu de recrutement (différente de la localité d'origine ?)
- Age au moment du recrutement
- Premier groupe intégré
- Avez-vous reçu un document écrit prouvant que vous avez intégré ce groupe ?
- Avez-vous changé de groupe au cours de cette période ?
- Lors de votre activité dans le groupe armé, étiez-vous affecté proche de votre lieu de résidence normal ou étiez-vous affecté loin ?
- Avez-vous des permissions ?
- Pouvez-vous combiner certaines activités civiles avec vos activités militaires ?
- Connaissez-vous quelqu’un dans ce groupe armé avant de prendre les armes ?
- Avant de vous engager, est-ce que vous-même, des connaissances ou certains membres de votre famille ont été molestés, blessés, voire tués par des faits de guerre ?
- Détaillez les circonstances de votre recrutement
- Avez-vous reçu une formation militaire
- Raconter ce que vous avez fait durant votre vie militaire, dans quelles activités vous étiez engagés
- Sur quels fronts, dans quels lieux et pendant quelles périodes avez-vous opéré ?
- Pendant votre vie militaire, étiez-vous basé en camp ? Où dormiez-vous / Où mangiez-vous le plus souvent ?
- Qu’avez-vous reçu de vos chefs pendant votre vie militaire et dans quelles circonstances ?
- Pendant votre vie militaire, aidiez-vous financièrement des gens de votre famille ou d’autres personnes en leur envoyant de l’argent, de la nourriture ou de l’équipement, de temps en temps?
- Êtes-vous encore actif dans le groupe armé en intermittence ? et pour quelles activités ?

Après guerre
- Mois et année de retour à la vie civile
- Pourquoi avez-vous quitté le groupe armé ?
- Si la guerre reprend, reprendriez-vous les armes ?
- Avez-vous définitivement quitté ou êtes-vous encore actif par intermittence ? (sonder un peu s’ils sont de temps en temps appelé pour sécuriser des transports de marchandise, ou des opérations particulières telles que la sécurisation des élections du Pool en 2010, etc.)
- Avez-vous encore des contacts avec vos anciens chefs militaires et si oui pour quelles raisons ?
- Êtes-vous retourné là où vous résidiez avant guerre ou êtes-vous allé ailleurs ? Dans les 2 cas détailler pourquoi. Mentionner également s’il s’agit de sa localité d’origine (né là).
- Avez-vous changé de localité entre votre désengagement et aujourd’hui ? Détaillez les lieux et raisons
- Avez-vous eu certaines difficultés à votre retour dans la localité d’origine, ou si vous vous êtes installés ailleurs, avez-vous eu certaines difficultés d’installation ?
- Trajectoire professionnelle de l’individu, depuis son retour ou sa nouvelle installation ailleurs jusqu’à aujourd’hui.
- Activité professionnelle actuelle (si travaux champêtres, préciser si la personne travaille son propre champ, le champ familial ou se fait embaucher comme manœuvre), ce travail vous rapporte-t-il assez pour couvrir vos besoins, est-ce un travail régulier ou saisonnier, combien d’argent pouvez-vous avoir pendant une bonne période, comment définissez-vous une bonne période, etc.)
- Avec qui habitez-vous ? Est-ce la même maison qu’avant guerre ?
- Payez-vous un loyer ou êtes-vous le propriétaire de maison ?
- Avez-vous votre propre champ ?
- Depuis la fin de la guerre, avez-vous été impliqué dans un conflit entre personnes (intra ou extra familial), ou avez-vous été impliqué dans une résolution de dispute ?
- Comment sont vos rapports avec les résidents de cette localité ?
- Avez-vous été officiellement démobilisé, avez-vous été renvoyés par vos chefs, ou vous-êtes vous démobilisé tout seul – Détailler les circonstances de votre désengagement
- Faites-vous partie d’un groupement économique ou culturel au sein de votre communauté ? Détailler (par groupement, j’entends surtout ici les groupements informels d’entraide hors projet – si la réponse est positive, inspirez-vous de la checklist micro-projet pour couvrir les questions)
- Avez-vous reçu un quelconque support extérieur en termes de kit pour microprojet ou financier ? Détailler comment ça s’est passé et les sommes et matériels reçus (si la réponse est positive, se référer ensuite à la checklist micro-projet)
- L’activité que vous faites aujourd’hui est-elle la même activité que vous faisiez avant guerre ?
Appendix 7 – Background information on the Congolese context (1993-2011)

The Republic of Congo has gone through three successive rounds of civil war since the 1990s, eventually ending with a ceasefire agreement between the government and the armed opposition (November 13-16, 1999). The peace agreement included a disposition of general amnesty for rebel fighters provided they agreed to lay down their weapons. The main rationale for this violent period was linked foremost to political rivalries between three politicians and their struggle for power. The three politicians were:

- Pascal Lissouba (political party: UPADS), was RoC President between 1992–1997, before being ousted by Sassou-Nguesso;
- Denis Sassou-Nguesso (political party: PCT), an army Colonel, was RoC President between 1979–1992 and regained power over Lissouba in 1997 after bitter fighting; and
- Bernard Kolélas (political party: MCDDI), native of the Pool region, was the defeated presidential candidate in 1992 and the Mayor of Brazzaville between 1994–1997.

As early as 1993, political parties exploited part of the civilian population and used them as armed militias: the Cocoyes were Lissouba’s private guards, the Cobras were Sassou-Nguesso’s and the Ninjas were Kolélas’. Other private militias—the so-called self-defense groups also referred to as the Mambas—were used for violent political activism in Brazzaville. If the early joiners of these political militias consisted mostly of young men born and brought up in Brazzaville itself, those who joined during and after 1997 mainly originated from secondary towns outside the capital. Although militias were politically-based, there have been disagreements between militia leaders and politicians, which has led to shifting allegiances. For example, when in mid-1997 some Ninjas’ influential recruiters did not agree with the new MCDDI political line to fight alongside the UPADS (their former enemy), they handed their men over to the Cobra militias and to the PCT.

The 1999 peace accords laid out a political framework to foster national dialogue, the demilitarization of political parties, the dismantling of militias, and the reorganization of the army. Its implementation was not without problems, however, in great part due to the persistence of pockets of insecurity in the Pool region. While the government initially attempted to crush the Pool antigovernment opposition by sending the most brutal of its military troops, this strategy fell short. After a series of violent clashes in the Pool in 2002–03, the government eventually brokered a separate peace agreement with Révérend Ntumi, the leader of the Ninja militia, in March 2003.

With Kolélas in exile between 1997 and 2005, Ntumi gradually appeared as the key leader of the Ninja militias, especially as the movement had evolved since 1993. In April 2003, 2,000 Ninjas turned their weapons in, but the process stalled shortly thereafter due to unmet political demands. Two years later, in April 2005, Ntumi and the government signed another agreement, which made specific dispositions for disarmament and for preparations for the 2007 parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, pockets of insecurity persisted in the Pool region, especially along the railroad, until 2011. These recent events are described in the report in the detailed description of the micro-local contexts in the Pool region.

In 2007, the President of RoC appointed Ntumi Délégué général auprès du Président de la République chargé de la promotion des valeurs de paix et de la réparation des séquelles de guerre (president’s general representative for the promotion of peace and reparation of the effects of war). He had the rank of minister, but for a variety of reasons did not assume his function until the end of December 2009.