



Research Seminar

Reintegrating Fighters: Priorities for Developing Countries

7 to 8 August 2018
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Seminar Report

1. Background

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) convened a research seminar on 'Reintegrating Fighters: Priorities for Developing Countries' from 7 to 8 August 2018. The seminar highlighted discussions and built on some of the recommendations made during the second global meeting on 'Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)', held by UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre in May 2018. It also took into account other recent discussions, such as the April 2018 African Union and Lake Chad Basin Commission-led meeting in N'Djamena on a regional strategy for the screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram.

The primary objective of the seminar was to deepen understanding of the key elements necessary for successful, evidence-based and contextually-relevant reintegration programmes, and how these can be implemented where there are limitations in resources and skills. The meeting produced a research agenda and relevant recommendations that can inform policy and programmatic interventions by UNDP, research institutions and regional stakeholders for more effective reintegration.

The seminar brought together participants from a number of countries including: Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Following the introductory session of the seminar, the substance of this report is reflected in five main sections:

- Reintegration challenges linked to violent extremism
- New and evolving approaches, lessons and challenges
- Family and community dynamics of reintegration
- Reintegration and the needs and capacities of women
- Addressing specific needs of youth and children

Each section presents a summary of discussions and highlights priority areas for research and policy. Some of the questions, answers and comments offered by participants are also included, along with insights that are relevant for local and global contexts. The concluding section summarises what is instructive for a research agenda and policy programming.

Table 1 presents three closing questions addressed during the seminar that reflect overarching research needs, priorities and recommendations linked to various aspects of this report. The seminar programme and list of participants are in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively, while Appendix 3 reflects reading materials given to participants prior to the seminar.

2. Introductory Session

The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre welcomed participants and highlighted the significance of the two-day seminar on the reintegration of fighters within the context of developing countries. An overview of the seminar programme was provided, which included establishing linkages between its content and the conclusions that emerged from the preceding meeting in Oslo. The seminar's co-convenor, the ISS, underscored the need to draw upon various contexts across the globe and the value that the rich experiences of participants add to reintegration efforts, particularly in African countries. The importance of achieving a research agenda that will benefit policy was highlighted. New approaches and ideas were anticipated from the seminar discussions with a view to enriching the current report. The welcome remarks concluded with formal introductions by participants.

3. Seminar Discussion

3.1 Reintegration Challenges Linked to Violent Extremism

The unfolding situations in the Lake Chad Basin and the Horn of Africa were in focus as they represent specific contexts within Africa where numerous challenges for reintegration exist.

In the specific crises linked to Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, a whole-of-society approach was recognised as essential. The need for policy harmonisation was emphasised by the African Union in light of the various countries affected in the Lake Chad Basin. The need to factor in local institutions, cultural dynamics and on-the-ground realities was also stressed as crucial in facilitating community-based reintegration. In the particular case of al-Shabaab, while ex-fighters are in Somalia and Kenya, their dynamics and needs are not always the same.

Furthermore, attention was drawn to the specific needs of women, children and young fighters. The complexities of prosecution and other criminal justice matters affecting those referred to as 'Boko Haram-associated persons' were raised. Questions regarding measuring the risk level of ex-fighters were addressed with responses about the use of profiling and screening criteria which, among other things, reveals specific acts or wrongs committed by ex-fighters. Screening exercises helped to identify individuals who posed a risk or threat considered as high compared to others. However, the adoption of official screening procedures, together with their systematic application in accordance with international human rights and international humanitarian law principles, is a major issue. Participants raised further questions regarding whether there is a strategy to address the difficulties associated with reintegration in light of state absence in certain communities.

Responses underscored that there were already development and town hall initiatives, which nevertheless require reinforcement.

“A whole-of-society approach will enable communities to play an active role in the reintegration process”

Priority Areas and Lessons for Research and Policy

- Need for a whole-of-society approach to enable communities to play an active role in the reintegration process.
- Planning reintegration in communities should start as early as possible. Timelines of different initiatives should be synchronised for increased coherence.
- Policy harmonisation is important, particularly in the case of the Lake Chad Basin countries.
- In the case of Kenya and Somalia, the dynamics and needs of ex-fighters can be different despite being affected by the same conflict.
- Local institutions, cultural and on-the-ground dynamics are crucial in facilitating reintegration.
- Need for research into factors that sustain terrorist groups and those that lead to their demise.
- Women play multiple roles as perpetrators, survivors and peacebuilders. They have agency and are important actors in communities.
- Need to develop projects that cater for women who have children.
- There is often poor access to local communities where project implementation is needed.
- Socio-economic needs and infrastructure must be considered in efforts aimed at effective reintegration in developing contexts.
- Trust building and social healing are key to achieving reconciliation.
- Need to avoid heavy-handed military approaches to counter-terrorism policies in affected countries.
- Opportunity and services mappings are among important assessments that must be conducted to prepare support for reintegration.
- Vocational and other forms of training must be provided in line with available community-based reintegration projects. They must be based on labour market assessments and be linked to job placement and/or self-employment opportunities.
- Psycho-social support and protection for victims and defectors of Boko Haram is essential.
- Beyond financial motives for joining a terrorist group, research must focus on reasons linked to historical injustices and ideology.

3.2 New and Evolving Approaches, Lessons and Challenges

New and evolving approaches benefit from the wealth of experience that fields like disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and violence prevention offer. They are also guided by the international counter-terrorism framework, which obligates Member States to consider prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration as part of efforts to bring terrorists to justice, develop and implement comprehensive risk assessments, and take appropriate action. The challenges that offenders in the violence prevention field contend with on individual, family and community levels are also instructive. Many post-incarceration experiences of prisoners are in some ways similar to those of ex-fighters from armed groups designated as terrorist organisations. For instance, there are concerns related to the (mis)management of social networks and substance abuse. In terms of education and

employment, affected individuals are lacking skills and motivation. The pathway out of violent extremism, as and when conducive to terrorism, is complex and a wide range of institutions and actors are essential; this reiterates the importance of a whole-of-society approach. Religious leaders in communities are very important actors in the reintegration of ex-fighters, particularly when addressing ideological issues. Seminar participants pointed out the need for counter-narratives that tap into Islamic doctrines in order to deconstruct the religious ideologies of terror groups. Discussions benefited from a particular reference to the Moroccan context, where initiatives have been inspired by religious actors.

“Ex-fighters should be involved in the design of programmes in order to reflect their specific needs and capacities”

Priority Areas and Lessons for Research and Policy

- There is need to see where lessons from other fields such as DDR and violence prevention are applicable and break silos that prevent learning from other fields.
- The importance of the initial months and year of an ex-fighter’s release for successful reintegration.
- Need to explore how best to involve ex-fighters in the design of programmes in order to reflect their specific needs and capacities.
- Need to determine whether factors such as gaining employment soon after release are indicative of success.
- Need to distinguish between the multiple methods used to support rehabilitation and their likely results.
- Long-term grassroot approaches are crucial in support of reintegration.
- Reintegration strategies and plans should be adopted by governments and key stakeholders. Upward and downward accountability in implementation of reintegration projects within the reintegration process is important.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) must maintain a neutral role in reintegration processes.
- Psychological support through trauma healing and sensitisation on drug abuse, as well as training of families, community members and services, are necessary.
- Ex-fighters’ isolation, stigma and rejection by communities upon return must be addressed.
- Preparation and training of community services for reintegration must start well before programmes are targeted to begin dealing with ex-fighters to increase chances of success.
- Strategies for reintegration require flexibility in order to integrate learning along the way.
- In crafting a reintegration strategy, it is important to utilise an individual approach that fits into the wider community context and draws on its capacities.
- The private sector in affected countries should be involved in reintegration processes.
- When engaging with terror groups that exploit religion, it is necessary to make reference to doctrinal issues and themes.
- It is important to strike a balance between enabling a former terrorist to accept the secular society and his/her Islamic religious context.
- Islamic leaders still need a lot of training with regard to engaging with women and children.

3.3 Family and Community Dynamics of Reintegration

How do local communities assist with reintegration processes? What challenges do families and communities face, and what research/knowledge gaps exist with regard to implementing community-based reintegration? With these questions at the heart of discussions, perspectives from the local contexts in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nigeria and Pakistan were helpful in addressing the issues raised. In the case of Afghanistan, the role of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), which supported ex-combatants from Taliban armed groups, was discussed. Issues relating to data sharing, inadequate studies and sensitivity in the country were acknowledged as challenges. The experience of communities in Pakistan reveals that trust, or trusted voices, is an important factor in community reintegration. This awareness notwithstanding, there is a lack of understanding of its effective use. Intergenerational dialogues and creating a platform for truth telling have characterised the path towards dealing with trauma in Cambodian communities where atrocities were committed in the past. The Nigerian context highlighted the lack of an integrated framework with regard to the role of psychology in dealing with the challenges of reintegration in communities. The importance of research that draws upon local sources and data was also emphasised.

“Establishing community truth-telling mechanisms is a necessary part of reintegration”

Priority Areas and Lessons for Research and Policy

- Religion can play an important role in community and social reconciliation.
- Inter-generational dialogue and hearing the voices of youth, particularly young women, to address violent extremism is vital.
- Need for an increased policy focus on children associated with armed groups with comprehensive reintegration programmes dedicated to address their specific needs.
- The establishment of community truth telling mechanisms can facilitate healing.
- Reintegration needs to be built on broader programmes aimed at addressing conditions that enable radicalisation to violence, reform criminal and transitional justice systems and build social and political resilience.
- Developing parenting skills and knowledge about child development is essential for both male and female ex-fighters.
- Well-developed community-oriented policing techniques can be effective in engaging families and communities, especially in engaging the youth.
- Sports, arts and culture-inclusive programmes are instrumental in building self-esteem and acceptance as part of reconciliation and reintegration initiatives.
- State institutions have a key role to play in ensuring reintegration; their political will and capacity must be strengthened.
- Research instruments need to be improved, institutionalised and regularly reviewed.
- The sharing of information and findings of what is going on in other areas and fields that have applied reintegration strategies is important.

3.4 Reintegration and the Needs and Capacities of Women

It is important to recognise the multiple roles women play as perpetrators and survivors, and the fact that women are also peacebuilders supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of male and female ex-fighters and victims of terror in communities. They can also be powerful change agents and contribute to prevention, detecting early signs of radicalisation in a community member before such an individual becomes violent. Perspectives on these issues were inspired by the local contexts of women in Kenya and

Nigeria, as well as the institutions linked to these women. The activities of organisations such as *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* (Women's Progress/Empowerment) in Kenya and the Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development in Nigeria were critical in the discussions. The contribution of women to reintegration goes beyond the formation of community-based organisations (CBOs), through which women have become credible voices on matters related to violent extremism. Women have gone ahead to take up community roles previously and erroneously viewed as suited only for men. These include, for example, becoming members of security forces and taking decision-making positions when it comes to security matters in communities.

Women have utilised their roles as mothers and wives to shape homes as well as educate and reform the social environment such that violence becomes a less desirable option. Women in some communities still face challenges due to cultural barriers that prevent them from openly engaging with the public and a lack of inclusion when it comes to government policies and programmes. Some women and young girls suffer from gender-based violence, victimisation, and trafficking by recruiters for terror groups who claim to offer opportunities for jobs or studies 'abroad'. Forced marriage is another tactic used by recruiters who disguise themselves as prospective suitors in order to marry young girls and turn them into jihadist wives.

“It is important to create social networks of mutual support for women and girls in communities in order to analyse experiences and prepare for reintegration”

Priority Areas and Lessons for Research and Policy

- Need for a better understanding of the dynamics around women's recruitment into terror groups and the reasons driving those who join voluntarily.
- More research required on women (and girl) victims, with the findings disseminated for use in addressing their specific needs through programming.
- Government policies on reintegration should be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders to encourage ownership and facilitate implementation.
- Need to ensure community consultation with regard to programmes and a family approach strategy.
- Need for a proper baseline survey before actual implementation of programmes to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation.
- Public awareness initiatives on government policies should be created to minimise and, where possible, avoid backlash and resistance from communities.
- Crucial attention is required to address low levels of education and skills development.
- Need for a better understanding of how changes in women's socio-economic circumstances and livelihoods affect or contribute to their reintegration.
- Social networks of mutual support should be created for women and girls in communities and internally displaced person (IDP) camps to think through and analyse experiences.
- Encourage conversations with diverse categories of individuals in affected communities to build social cohesion and divert attitudes away from violence.
- Women and girls have to be reached with proper psycho-social and trauma support.

3.5 Addressing Specific Needs of Youth and Children

Countries affected by violent extremism have a huge youth population implicated both as perpetrators and victims. Consequently, planning for the successful reintegration of this

demographic is crucial. Children have been integrated into the strategies of terror groups. For example, al-Shabaab in Somalia is one of the most aggressive recruiters of minors as child soldiers. The Somali situation therefore offers a case study of where the reintegration of youth and children is being tested. Conversations around these issues are reflected in the work of the Elman Peace Centre in Somalia. This organisation espouses a theory of change supported by three pillars: direct service delivery in communities; involvement of allies and mentors to support returnees/ex-combatants; and the sustenance of reintegration efforts through social cohesion.

The PAIMAN Alumni Trust in Pakistan also adds value to the debates on youth reintegration. At the core of their activities are active citizenship, critical thinking and psycho-social counselling, all of which guide the framework used for the rehabilitation of ex-fighters. Nevertheless, some of the challenges to the successful reintegration of youth and children include harassment by security forces in communities. There are also obstacles associated with the screening and enrolling of these individuals into community programmes with the cooperation of the government. Challenges associated with stigmatisation of children and their treatment as security threats were also discussed. In addition, the lack of a comprehensive reintegration strategy leads to weak coordination among different actors and poor coherence among measures designed to support groups of ex-fighters that, in the end, share similar needs. Bearing in mind the economic realities in various communities, discussions noted the importance of equipping children and youth that were previously associated with terror groups with skills that are relevant.

“Country-specific research that considers the historical, political and cultural dynamics of the people is essential for determining what works and what does not in reintegration”

Priority Areas and Lessons for Research and Policy

- Research should seek to explore and present the resettlement experiences of former child soldiers in order to improve policy and programming.
- Country-specific research that considers the historical, political and cultural dynamics of the people is essential for determining what works and what does not in reintegration.
- The duration of a reintegration process needs to be further investigated at the individual and group level for different contexts; reintegration programme support remains limited in time but should be sufficiently long to support and accelerate the reintegration process.
- There is a lack of visibility of former girl soldiers in policy and programmes, as well as in the academic literature.
- More data is required with regard to mothers and their children in the context of reintegration efforts.
- Establishing a legal framework to protect the rights of ex-fighters and develop protection mechanisms through policies and programmes is crucial.
- Third-party monitoring of reintegration processes accompanied by greater transparency is required.
- There is a need for the use of action research tools and analysis in the area of reintegration to be more widespread.
- Deliberate research on the terms and concepts of narratives exploited by various extremist groups is needed.

- Greater awareness and the development of parenting skills and knowledge on child behaviour is essential.
- Well-developed community-oriented oversight techniques are effective in engaging youth, families and communities.
- Addressing the vulnerabilities that could jeopardise the reintegration of children is key for their successful reintegration.
- Linkages between strategy/policy and on-the-ground implementation must be reinforced.
- A whole-of-society approach plays an important role in promoting children's reintegration.

4. Conclusion

The principal objective of the seminar was to deepen understanding of the components essential for successful, evidence-based and contextually-relevant reintegration programmes. A major focus of the seminar was on how the knowledge derived from discussions can be relevant in communities where there are limited resources and skills. Five inter-related themes inspired conversations around the table: reintegration challenges linked to violent extremism; new and evolving approaches, lessons and challenges; family and community dynamics of reintegration; reintegration and the needs and capacities of women; and addressing specific needs and harnessing the capacities of youth and children. The challenges, needs and recommendations for a useful research agenda and policy interventions were emphasised. Participants utilised the seminar's global platform to share their local and unique experiences. First-hand knowledge on a wide-range of issues was reinforced by the contextual dimension of the various themes explored. Overarching research needs, priorities and recommendations that resonate across the seminar themes are further presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Principal Research Needs, Priorities and Recommendations

What are the most fundamental gaps in knowledge on reintegration and what type of research is needed?	How best can relevant research on reintegration be shared or disseminated in order to reach a wide and diverse audience?	What are the most effective ways of channelling research findings on reintegration into policy decisions and programmes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generating an understanding of the reasons why those associated with terrorist groups leave violence behind and establishing the modalities, models and processes that can be used to support their reintegration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper documentation of research must first be done. Research must be presented in short, concise and clear formats to enable policymakers and donors to easily extract key findings and recommendations. The use of quantitative methods to present findings is also beneficial for concision purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbying and advocacy to exert impact on international, country and local level policies is required; engaging directly with relevant stakeholders' fora.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the actors and institutions that are most appropriate for engaging individuals linked to violent extremist groups. Depending on the context, places of worship (mosques), religious leaders, families, women and community leaders may serve as a means of connecting with individuals linked to violent extremist groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of an online repository or virtual library to facilitate global access to a wide audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with donors and stakeholders in a country through the use of credible voices and opinion leaders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-country, cross regional and in-depth community studies and approaches should be adopted for research. There are local efforts and studies but it is necessary to consolidate the various efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of research through online platforms such as Twitter, as well as the use of traditional mass media channels of communication where internet access in communities is limited (e.g. (local radio stations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritising and linking citizen consultation to research findings and directing this fusion into the policy stream.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to capture oral histories, narratives and arguments in different communities, and ensure that they inform the development of terminologies for common understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of research into several languages will also help to expand reach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaching out to grassroots organisations and channelling output to policy programmes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to develop comprehensive assessments and programme evaluations to measure the successes and failures of reintegration programmes. This is largely due to little knowledge of the real impact of these programmes. Developing tracking mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of reintegration is also vital. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When absolutely necessary, physical meetings among researchers, policymakers and other practitioners and stakeholders can also be convened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observing and learning from other advocacy groups with a view to connecting lessons with policy.

Appendix 1

Reintegrating Fighters: Priorities for Developing Countries

Research Seminar

7 to 8 August 2018
Radisson Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Agenda	
Day one: Tuesday 7 August 2018	
08.00-08.30	Registration, tea and coffee
08.30-09.00	Welcome and introduction
	Welcoming remarks - Dr. Sarah Lister, <i>United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre</i>
	Background and overview of round-table - <i>Ms Cheryl Frank, Institute for Security Studies</i>
	Group Photo and refreshments
09.00-11.00	Opening Session: Panel Discussion on Reintegration Challenges linked to Violent Extremism Chair - Dr Sarah Lister, United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre
	The state of play in the Lake Chad Basin: and implications for reintegration - <i>Major-General Nuhu Angbazo, Chief of Civil Military Affairs, Nigerian Army</i>
	Reintegrating defectors and returning foreign terror fighters: Key global and European challenges - <i>Mr Richard Barrett, The Global Strategy Network</i>
	DDRRR reframed as Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration in the Lake Chad Basin - <i>Ms Lina Imran, African Union</i>
	Meeting the needs of Al Shabaab former fighters: Lessons from Somalia - <i>Mr Patrick Loots, United Nations Office to the AU</i>
11.00-13.00	Theme 1: New and Evolving Approaches, Lessons and Challenges Chair - Dr Glauca Boyer, United Nations Development Programme, Geneva
	Key elements for successful reintegration post incarceration: Evidence from violence prevention - <i>Prof. Lukas Muntingh, University of the Western Cape, South Africa</i>
	A “whole of society” approach to reintegration and what this means in developing contexts – <i>Mr Chris C. Bosley, United States Institute for Peace</i>
	Religious leaders and reintegration – <i>Mr Noman Benotman, Quilliam International</i>
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.00-16.00	Theme 2: Family and community dynamics of reintegration Chair - Ms Cheryl Frank, Institute for Security Studies

	The role of communities in reintegration: The case of Pakistan - <i>Mr Shafqat Mehmood PAIMAN Alumni Trust</i>
	Community dynamics for the reintegration of former combatants into Afghanistan and Cambodia – <i>Dr Chona Echavez, Research Institute for Mindano Culture and Mr Khet Long, Peace Institute for Cambodia</i>
	Trauma and the challenges of reintegration: Lessons from Nigeria - <i>Dr Fatima Akilu, NEEM Foundation, Nigeria</i>
16.00-16.15	Tea and coffee
16.15-16.30	Wrap up of Day One - Ms Uyo Yenwong-Fai, Institute for Security Studies
End of Day One	
Day two: Wednesday, 8 August 2018	
09.00-10.30	Theme 3: Addressing specific needs of women Chair - Mr Simon Ridley, United Nations Development Programme, Addis Ababa
	Incorporating the needs of women in reintegration: The case of Kenya - <i>Ms Sureya Roble, Maendeleo ya wanawake organisation, Kenya</i>
	Incorporating the needs of women in reintegration: The case of Nigeria – <i>Ms Hamsatu Allamin, Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development, Nigeria</i>
10.30-10.45	Tea and Coffee
10:45-12.45	Theme 4: Addressing specific needs of youth and children Chair - Ms Uyo Yenwong-Fai, Institute for Security Studies
	Youth and reintegration in Pakistan - <i>Mr Shafqat Mehmood PAIMAN Alumni Trust</i>
	Children and reintegration: The case of Pakistan – <i>Ms Mossarat Qadeem, PAIMAN Alumni Trust</i>
	The reintegration of children: The case of Somalia- <i>Mr Abdikarim Hassan, Elman Peace Centre</i>
12.45-13.45	Lunch
13.45-15.00	Discussion of research needs, priorities and recommendations - Ms Sarah Lister, <i>United Nations Development Programme, Oslo Governance Centre</i>
15.00-15.30	Closing remarks - UNDP and ISS
End of day Two	

Appendix 2

UNDP/ ISS Research Seminar 7 – 8 August 2018 Participants List

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Appendix 3

- Consolidated relevant Security Council resolutions – on the emergence of the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration requirements.
- Literature Review on Reintegration.
- USIP Article – ‘Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative, United States Institute for Peace’, by Georgia Holmer and Adrian Shtuni.
- IDDRS 4.30 Reintegration – UN reintegration guidance within the framework of DDR.
- (Draft) IDDRS 2.42 ‘Reintegration of persons associated with armed groups designated as terrorist organizations’ – the new UN guidance under development specifically for the reintegration of persons associated with armed groups designated as terrorist organizations.